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Committee for Fisheries (STECF)

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The application of the landing
obligation on the fisheries targeting
Venus clams in the Northern Adriatic
Sea (STECF-16-06)

Edited by Clara Ulrich, Jesper Andersen & Hendrik Doerner

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European Commission
Joint Research Centre (JRC)
Institute for the Protection and Security of the Citizen (IPSC)

Contact information
STECF secretariat
Address: Maritime Affairs Unit, Via Enrico Fermi 2749, 21027 Ispra VA, Italy
E-mail: stecf-secretariat@jrc.ec.europa.eu
Tel.: 0039 0332 789343
Fax: 0039 0332 789658

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<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc>

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Abstract

Commission Decision of 25 February 2016 setting up a Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries, C(2016) 1084, OJ C 74, 26.2.2016, p. 4–10. The Commission may consult the group on any matter relating to marine and fisheries biology, fishing gear technology, fisheries economics, fisheries governance, ecosystem effects of fisheries, aquaculture or similar disciplines. This report focuses on the application of the landing obligation on the fisheries targeting Venus clams in the Northern Adriatic Sea.

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SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES (STECF)

The application of the landing obligation on the fisheries targeting Venus clams in the Northern Adriatic Sea (STECF-16-06)

THIS REPORT WAS ISSUED DURING THE PLENARY MEETING HELD IN BRUSSELS, 10-15 APRIL 2016

Background

The landing obligation will be compulsory, as from 1 January 2017, for the species that define the fisheries (other than small pelagics) and that are subject to a minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) according to Annex III of the "Mediterranean Regulation"¹. The fisheries targeting the mollusc bivalve Venus clams (*Venus gallina* – as originally described – or *Chamelea gallina*)² are therefore subject to this provision.

In light of this, Italy submitted to the European Commission a proposal of a three-year discard plan for the fisheries targeting Venus clams by hydraulic dredges in the Northern Adriatic Sea (see Annexes of the present report). The main elements of the plan are: the setting of a new MCRS; the introduction of a tolerance of 5% (weight) from the proposed MCRS and; provisions for the re-stocking of undersized individuals caught alive. The draft discard plan is accompanied by a study which evaluates the possible effects of re-defining the MCRS.

Request to the STECF

STECF is requested to review and make any appropriate comments and recommendations on the draft discard plan for the fisheries targeting Venus clams in the Northern Adriatic Sea and its supporting study. In particular, STECF is requested to:

- Provide an opinion whether the survivability of Venus clams has been scientifically underpinned in the discard plan, and assess the potential survivability rates of Venus clams, taking into account the characteristics of the fishing gear, the fishing operations, the biological state of the Venus clams after the fishing operations, and the environmental conditions of the re-stocking area.
- Assess the potential impacts on the stock of the proposed change in the MCRS for Venus clams from 25 mm to 22 mm on exploitation rates and stock biomass.
- Assess whether the proposed scientific monitoring programme is likely to provide adequate data and information to evaluate the effects of the discard plan

¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006 of 21 December 2006 concerning management measures for the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean Sea, amending Regulation (EEC) No 2847/93 and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1626/94.

² The Annex III sets a minimum conservation reference size of 25 mm for the *Venus spp.*

In making this evaluation, STECF is asked to take into account the recent works of the STECF-EWG 15-14³ and of the European Parliament⁴.

NOTE: The Commission requests the STECF to provide its advise on this item by 13 April cob or 14 April at the latest.

STECF comments

STECF reviewed the draft Venus clam discard plan (DP) together with the supporting technical documentation. The DP contains detailed information on the fishery and on the biological characteristics of Venus clam.

STECF notes that DP relates to the entire Adriatic Sea and some Tyrrhenian areas and not only to the Northern portion of the Adriatic. Furthermore, the DP proposes to remove the request of tolerance of 5% by weight of undersized individuals providing the proposed MCRS of 22mm is adopted Plan

- *Request 1: Provide an opinion whether the survivability of Venus clams has been scientifically underpinned in the discard plan, and assess the potential survivability rates of Venus clams, taking into account the characteristics of the fishing gear, the fishing operations, the biological state of the Venus clams after the fishing operations, and the environmental conditions of the re-stocking area.*

STECF acknowledges that clams are among the species for which a high survival after the catch be considered as likely. High survival rate of discarded at sea individuals is an argument for justifying a request for derogation from the landing obligation for the discarded fraction of the catch.

The survival rates of individuals discarded at sea after sorting on the deck is not addressed in detail but references to survivability studies on Venus clams are cited in the plan.

STECF reviewed the study on clam survivability by Moschino et al. (2008). Authors provided estimates of impact of experimental hydraulic dredging on *Chamelea gallina* in two sites along the north-western Adriatic coast (Jesolo and Lido) by detecting and quantifying shell damage caused by fishing operations on both captured and discarded clams. A positive relationship was observed between damage level and clam size: small-sized samples (length <17 mm) were less damaged than medium-sized ones (17mm < length <25 mm) and commercial size clams (>25 mm) showed the highest damage level. The mortality of dredging at high water pressure (inlet pressure ~2.5 bar) and mechanical sieving for sorting, as in commercial fishing was significantly higher at Jesolo than at Lido reaching 19.6% in February. Generally mortality ranges between 2-20% with an average around 10 %. This corresponds thus to a survival rate of at least 80%.

³ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Landing Obligation - Part 6 (Fisheries targeting demersal species in the Mediterranean Sea) (STECF-15-19) 2015. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, EUR 27600 EN, JRC 98678, 268 pp. [doi:10.2788/65549](https://doi.org/10.2788/65549).

⁴ Scarcella G. & Cabanelas A.M. (2016) Research for PECH Committee - The clam fisheries sector in the EU - The Adriatic Sea case. Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies, Fisheries, 60 pp. [doi:10.2861/401646](https://doi.org/10.2861/401646).

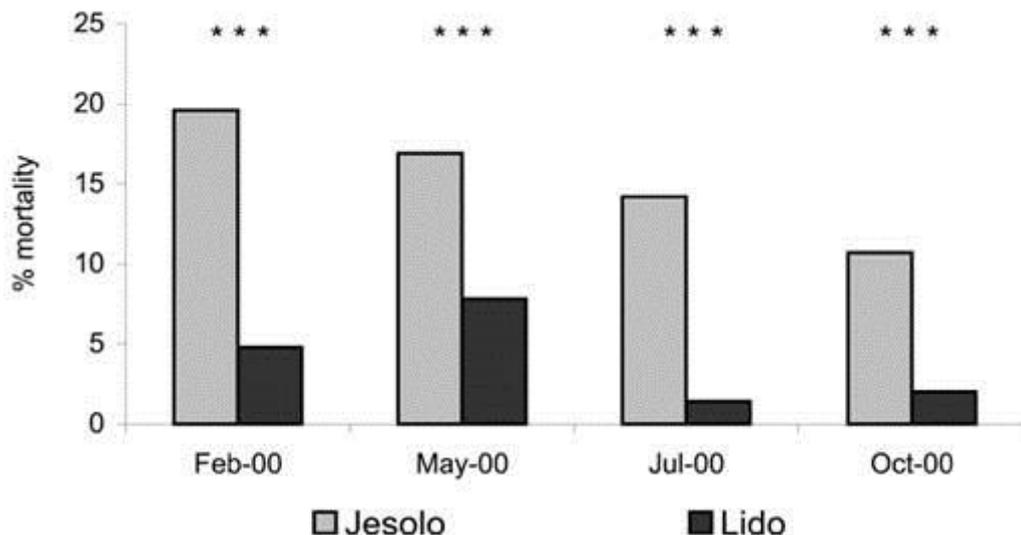


Figure 1. Mortality values, calculated on the basis of the percentage of crushed umbos or shells, in *C. gallina* collected at Lido and Jesolo (Northern Adriatic Sea) using high water pressure and mechanised sorting as in commercial fishing (Moschino et al. (2008)).

STECF has previously described in detail how survival studies should be undertaken and evaluated in order to support proposed exemptions from the LO (ref to STECF LO part 1 2013, and examples in LO part 6 2015). In particular, aspects such as the duration of the survivability studies (medium-term survivability analysis beyond the first few minutes/hours after the catch) as well as the representativeness of the studies compared to standard fisheries practices have been highlighted as important. It is not clear whether the studies above meet these standards. Nevertheless, they provide an indication that survival is potentially high. Additionally, STECF notes that the study above was performed with a jet pressure of 2.5 bar, whereas the fisheries operate now with lower pressure (1.8 bar), which may infer lower mortality.

The undersized fraction of the retained catch is proposed to be utilized for re-stocking. The members of the management consortium should be committed to do so, and should be continuously informed regarding the distribution of the more suitable areas for this action. As re-stocking is done, such areas need to be protected from fishing allowing individuals to reach a commercial size. A rotation system is proposed. The plan states that a special attention will be dedicated to the discarding at sea procedures aimed at maximizing the expected positive effects (related to choices in timing, identification of suitable grounds for restocking, the way undersized individuals are stored on board and on the deck and the procedures for the successive restocking).

STECF cannot assess the added value of the proposed re-stocking procedure. The expected costs and benefits need to be assessed and compared with other options, for example the potential effects of releasing live animals where they have been caught. The identification of the best practices aimed at granting benefits for the stock derived from such measure would be helpful. In particular, it is necessary to find suitable grounds for settlement (where population density is currently low but conditions result favorable for growth and survival).

STECF also notes that the proportion of the catch that is intended for re-stocking (under 22 mm) is relatively small with the current size of the grid.

- Request 2. Assess the potential impacts on the stock of the proposed change in the MCRS for Venus clams from 25 mm to 22 mm on exploitation rates and stock biomass.

The main argument for requesting the change in MCRS is the limited occurrence of large individuals (>25mm) in the catches, and there is thus a potential economic loss for the fleets. A reduction in the MCRS would increase the catch that can be retained per unit time of fishing activity and thereby reduce the fishing time required to take the daily quota. The DP states that the absence of large sized individuals is mainly related to a reduction of growth rates that occurred in recent years due to changes in the environmental conditions. There is though no evidence presented to support this statement. While the influence of environmental conditions cannot be discounted, STECF notes that reported landings have declined dramatically from 100,000 t in the 1980s to 14,000 tons in recent years. This can be linked to a major reduction in the fleet capacity as well as improved management. Nevertheless, the results of exploratory stock assessments submitted in support the DP show that fishing mortality is really high for this stock and is estimated to be 6-7 times the estimated natural mortality rate. Such high exploitation rates indicate that pronounced growth overfishing may be taking place. Therefore, the reduction of MCRS may not be compatible with the objectives of achieving MSY.

The DP has investigated whether the change in MCRS could be argued on the basis of maturity size. The DP has presented a comprehensive literature review, collating many different studies related to clams growth and maturity. Some studies have documented length at first maturity to be about 15 mm, corresponding to individuals aged 1. Other studies have estimated that only a small proportion of age 1 individuals contribute to the spawning population. Full maturity occurs at larger sizes (about 20-25 mm = 2 years old individuals). The current MCRS at 25 mm is within the range given in these studies. If MCRS is set to be above L50, the size where half of the individuals are mature, then 25 mm is likely to be on the upper end of L50 estimate. If that is the case, reducing MCRS to 22 mm may not be incompatible with the requirement of being above L50. Nevertheless STECF notes that other studies have showed a power relationship between fecundity and size, implying that it is likely that significantly more eggs are produced with animals at 25mm compared to 22 mm (see a list of such studies in the EP report by Scarcella and Cabanelas, 2016).

The DP asserts that maintaining the MCRS at 25 mm is of little ecological benefit for the population sustainability. STECF considers though that reducing MCRS will not bring a positive impact for the resource. In the medium-term, this is likely to result in a shift in the age structure in the retained catch towards smaller-sized individuals, more of which will need to be caught for a given weight of catch. This will lead to an increase in growth-overfishing and also reduce the spawning potential of the stock. The Technical Document presented an analysis on the likely *impacts of changes in legal landing size*. The potential for reproduction would be reduced by around 8 %. The report states that "The reduction of the minimum size is 22 mm can be associated with more intensive removal of intermediate sizes, which leads to an overall decrease of secondary production by the species as a major fraction is removed from an early stage and exported from the system"

- *Request 3. Assess whether the proposed scientific monitoring programme is likely to provide adequate data and information to evaluate the effects of the discard plan*
- STECF notes that the monitoring program foreseen in the DP is based on the Italian National Program for fisheries data collection under EU Reg. 199/08 (DCF). Under the revised DCF, the data collection activities will be further increased and additional surveys in both fished and restocking areas will be implemented at district level. Being based on DCF standards it is thus adequate to evaluate the effects of the discard plan.

STECF Conclusions

STECF agrees that there are indications from older studies that the part of the catch of Venus clam fishery which is under the legal size may survive to a high extent. Nevertheless, the information presented in the discard plan for Venus clams is insufficient to quantify with certainty the actual survivability of discarded catches. A full study following the agreed standards would be

needed to support the request for exemption. If restocking is implemented, such a survival study should distinguish the mortality processes between individuals discarded directly to the sea following automatic sorting and the undersized individuals from the retained catch which are sorted and restocked later on.

A reduction of MCRS from 25 to 22 mm is predicted to lead to a reduction of 8% of the reproductive potential, according to the simulations presented together with the plan. The data and information provided is not sufficient for STECF to quantify any associated change in the fishing mortality. The reduction in MCRS is expected to provide economic gains in the short-term. The medium and long-term effects are unknown. The stock appears as being highly exploited, and STECF notes therefore that while the MCRS at 22 mm may be compatible with the length at maturity, the change in MCRS will induce some reduction in the stock biomass.

STECF concludes also that the monitoring programme foreseen in the DP is based on DCF standards and thus it is likely adequate to evaluate the effects of the discard plan.

References

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- Scarcella, G., Cabanelas, A.M. 2016. Research for pech committee – The Clam Fisheries Sector in the EU - the Adriatic Sea Case. Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies European Parliament B-1047 Brussels. 60 pp.

Contact details of STECF members and meeting participants

1 - Information on STECF members and invited experts' affiliations is displayed for information only. In any case, Members of the STECF, invited experts, and JRC experts shall act independently. In the context of the STECF work, the committee members and other experts do not represent the institutions/bodies they are affiliated to in their daily jobs. STECF members and experts also declare at each meeting of the STECF and of its Expert Working Groups any specific interest which might be considered prejudicial to their independence in relation to specific items on the agenda. These declarations are displayed on the public meeting's website if experts explicitly authorized the JRC to do so in accordance with EU legislation on the protection of personnel data. For more information: <http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/adm-declarations>

STECF members:

STECF members:

Name	Address ¹	Tel.	Email
STECF members			
Abella, J. Alvaro	Independent consultant	Tel. 0039-3384989821	aabellafisheries@gmail.com
Andersen, Jesper Levring	Department of Food and Resource Economics (IFRO) Section for Environment and Natural Resources University of Copenhagen Rolighedsvej 25 1958 Frederiksberg Denmark	Tel.dir.: +45 35 33 68 92	jla@ifro.ku.dk
Arrizabalaga, Haritz	AZTI / Unidad de Investigación Marina, Herrera kaia portualdea z/g 20110 Pasaia (Gipuzkoa), Spain	Tel.: +34667174477	harri@azti.es
Bailey, Nicholas	Marine Scotland Science, Marine Laboratory, P.O Box 101 375 Victoria Road, Torry Aberdeen AB11 9DB UK	Tel: +44 (0)1224 876544 Direct: +44 (0)1224 295398 Fax: +44 (0)1224 295511	baileyn@marlab.ac.uk n.bailey@marlab.ac.uk
Bertignac, Michel	Laboratoire de Biologie Halieutique IFREMER Centre de Brest BP 70 - 29280 Plouzane, France	tel : +33 (0)2 98 22 45 25 - fax : +33 (0)2 98 22 46 53	michel.bertignac@ifremer.fr
Borges, Lisa	FishFix, Brussels, Belgium		info@fishfix.eu
Cardinale, Massimiliano (vice-chair)	Föreningsgatan 45, 330 Lysekil, Sweden	Tel: +46 523 18750	massimiliano.cardinale@slu.se

Name	Address ¹	Tel.	Email
STECF members			
Catchpole, Thomas	CEFAS Laboratory, Pakefield Road, Lowestoft Suffolk, UK NR33 0HT		thomas.catchpole@cefas.co.uk
Curtis, Hazel	Sea Fish Industry Authority 18 Logie Mill Logie Green Road Edinburgh EH7 4HS, U.K.	Tel: +44 (0)131 524 8664 Fax: +44 (0)131 558 1442	Hazel.curtis@seafish.co.uk
Daskalov, Georgi	Laboratory of Marine Ecology, Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences	Tel.: +359 52 646892	Georgi.daskalov@gmail.com
Döring, Ralf (vice-chair)	Thünen Bundesforschungsinstitut, für Ländliche Räume, Wald und Fischerei, Institut für Seefischerei - AG Fischereiökonomie, Palmaille 9, D-22767 Hamburg, Germany	Tel.: 040 38905- 185 Fax.: 040 38905- 263	ralf.doering@thuenen.de
Gascuel, Didier	AGROCAMPUS OUEST 65 Route de Saint Briec, CS 84215, F-35042 RENNES Cedex France	Tel: +33(0)2.23.48 .55.34 Fax: +33(0)2.23.48.55. 35	Didier.Gascuel@agrocampus-ouest.fr
Knittweis, Leyla	Department of Biology University of Malta Msida, MSD 2080 Malta		Leyla.knittweis@um.edu.mt
Malvarosa, Loretta	NISEA S.c.a.r.l.		malvarosa@nisea.eu
Martin, Paloma	CSIC Instituto de Ciencias del Mar Passeig Marítim, 37-49 08003 Barcelona Spain	Tel: 4.93.2309500 Fax: 34.93.2309555	paloma@icm.csic.es
Motova, Arina	Sea Fish Industry Authority 18 Logie Mill Logie Green Road Edinburgh EH7 4HS, U.K.	Tel.: +44 131 524 8662	arina.motova@seafish.co.uk
Murua, Hilario	AZTI / Unidad de Investigación Marina, Herrera kaia portualdea z/g 20110 Pasaia (Gipuzkoa), Spain	Tel: 0034 667174433 Fax: 94 6572555	hmurua@azti.es
Nord, Jenny	The Swedish Agency of Marine and Water Management (SwAM)	Tel. 0046 76 140 140 3	Jenny.nord@havochvatten.se

Name	Address ¹	Tel.	Email
STECF members			
Pastoor, Martin	Pelagic Freezer-trawler Association, Louis Braillelaan 80, 2719 EK Zoetermeer, The Netherlands		mpastoor@pelagicfish.eu
Paulrud, Anton	Swedish Agency of Marine and Water Management	Tel.: +46 106986292	Anton.paulrud@hochvatten.se
Prellezo, Raúl	AZTI -Unidad de Investigación Marina Txatxarramendi Ugarteaz/g 48395 Sukarrieta (Bizkaia), Spain	Tel: +34 667174368	rprellezo@azti.es
Raid, Tiit	Estonian Marine Institute, University of Tartu, Mäealuse 14, Tallin, EE-126, Estonia	Tel.: +372 58339340 Fax: +372 6718900	Tiit.raid@gmail.com
Sabatella, Evelina Carmen	NISEA, Via Irno, 11, 84135 Salerno, Italy	TEL: +39 089795775	e.sabatella@nisea.eu
Sala, Antonello	Italian National Research Council (CNR) Institute of Marine Sciences (ISMAR), Largo Fiera della Pesca, 1 60125 Ancona - Italy	Tel: +39 071 2078841 Fax: +39 071 55313 Mob.: +39 3283070446	a.sala@ismar.cnr.it
Scarcella, Giuseppe	1) Italian National Research Council (CNR), Institute of Marine Sciences (ISMAR) - Fisheries Section, Largo Fiera della Pesca, 1, 60125 Ancona - Italy 2) AP Marine Environmental Consultancy Ltd, 2, ACROPOLEOS ST. AGLANJIA, P.O.BOX 26728 1647 Nicosia, Cyprus	Tel: +39 071 2078846 Fax: +39 071 55313 Tel.: +357 99664694	g.scarcella@ismar.cnr.it gscarcella@apmarine.com.cy
Soldo, Alen	Department of Marine Studies, University of Split, Livanjska 5, 21000 Split, Croatia	Tel.: +385914433906	soldo@unist.hr
Somarakis, Stylianos	Institute of Marine Biological Resources and Inland Waters (IMBRIW), Hellenic Centre of Marine Research (HCMR), Thalassocosmos Gournes, P.O. Box 2214, Heraklion 71003, Crete, Greece	Tel.: +30 2810 337832 Fax: +30 6936566764	somarak@hcmr.gr
Stransky, Christoph	Thünen Institute [TI-SF] Federal Research Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries, Institute of Sea Fisheries, Palmaille 9, D-22767 Hamburg, Germany	Tel. +49 40 38905-228 Fax: +49 40 38905-263	christoph.stransky@thuenen.de

Name	Address ¹	Tel.	Email
STECF members			
Ulrich, Clara (chair)	Technical University of Denmark, National Institute of Aquatic Resources, (DTU Aqua), Charlottenlund Slot, Jægersborg Allé 1, 2920 Charlottenlund, Denmark		clu@aquat.dtu.dk
van Hoof, Luc	IMARES, Haringkade 1, IJmuiden, The Netherlands	Tel.: +31 61061991	Luc.vanhoof@wur.nl
Vanhee, Willy	Independent consultant		wvanhee@telenet.de
Vrgoc, Nedo	Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries, Split, Setaliste Ivana Mestrovica 63, 21000 Split, Croatia	Tel.: +385 21408002	vrgoc@izor.hr

JRC expert			
Name	Address	Telephone no.	Email
Casey, John	Joint Research Centre JRC		john.casey@jrc.ec.europa.eu

European Commission			
Name	Address	Telephone no.	Email
Doerner, Hendrik	Joint Research Centre JRC, STECF secretariat		Stecf-secretariat@jrc.ec.europa.eu

List of Annexes

List of electronic annexes documents:

1. Italy proposal to the European Commission of a three-year discard plan for the fisheries targeting Venus clams by hydraulic dredges in the Northern Adriatic Sea - Italian
2. Italy proposal to the European Commission of a three-year discard plan for the fisheries targeting Venus clams by hydraulic dredges in the Northern Adriatic Sea - English



Ministero delle politiche agricole alimentari e forestali

*DIPARTIMENTO DELLE POLITICHE COMPETITIVE,
DELLA QUALITA' AGROALIMENTARE, IPPICHE E DELLA PESCA
DIREZIONE GENERALE DELLA PESCA MARITTIMA
E DELL'ACQUACOLTURA*

Valutazioni tecniche, programmatiche e strategiche relative al PIANO RIGETTI VONGOLE

Sul tema, oltre a ogni preambolo, si sottopongono gli aspetti e le modalità di gestione indicate di seguito:

- Al fine di rafforzare il Piano Rigetti Vongole, si concorda con l'ipotesi di prevedere la **rinuncia alla tolleranza in peso del 5%** sulla taglia minima di riferimento, ammesso, tuttavia, che quest'ultima sia pari a **22 mm**.
- Le **aree di ripopolamento**, identificate dai singoli Consorzi di gestione (ex art.2 comma 1 lettera E del Decreto 1 dicembre 1998 n.515) per il riposizionamento in mare del prodotto sottotaglia vagliato a terra, dovranno essere preventivamente indicate dagli stessi Co.Ge.Vo. all'Autorità Marittima Competente per Compartimento la quale, così come avviene attualmente nell'ambito delle usuali operazioni di gestione, provvederà ad emanare apposite ordinanze di **divieto di pesca con draghe idrauliche nelle aree in parola**; le autorità locali avranno inoltre il compito di far rispettare i provvedimenti adottati.
- La **frazione sottotaglia** derivante dalla seconda vagliatura a terra dovrà essere trasferita viva nelle aree di ripopolamento. Il Decreto n. 515 già citato prevede che il consorzio proponga al Ministero delle Politiche Agricole Alimentari e Forestali misure tecniche concernenti, tra l'altro, anche la costituzione delle aree di ripopolamento, secondo un criterio di rotazione volto a garantire la migliore sostenibilità ambientale, ai sensi

dell'art.16 del Reg. CE 1967/2006. **Nelle aree di ripopolamento, e fino a quando le vongole non raggiungeranno la dimensione legale, sarà vietata ogni attività di pesca.**

- Per rafforzare le possibilità **di controllo** sul rispetto del **divieto di pesca nelle aree di ripopolamento**, i Co.Ge.Vo. potranno/dovranno avvalersi di sistemi di verifica della posizione delle imbarcazioni con draghe idrauliche basati su localizzazione GPS, in grado di registrare dunque tutte le fasi inerenti l'attività della flotta e dotati della possibilità di emettere un'allerta-rapida indirizzato alle imbarcazioni che violino tali divieti. Si consideri che sono già presenti sistemi di controllo geo-referenziati (gestiti in GPS) nei Compartimenti marittimi dell'Alto Adriatico. Tramite tali sistemi sarà possibile conoscere, tra l'altro, il **numero di draghe idrauliche operanti giornalmente**, potranno essere ottimizzate le procedure e l'organizzazione delle operazioni di **vaglio a terra del prodotto** (a cura dei Consorzi di gestione), e sarà più semplice controllare le operazioni di **semina delle vongole** sottotaglia nelle aree di mare in precedenza individuate.
- La **selezione a terra** del prodotto pescato inserisce un forte elemento di **responsabilità** nei confronti dei dirigenti dei Consorzi di Gestione, soprattutto in assenza di tolleranza sulla taglia minima. Infatti, le norme sulla tracciabilità del prodotto prevedono che chi assume la responsabilità di garantire l'osservanza del limite di taglia, può essere perseguito **penalmente o amministrativamente** nel caso in cui in successivi controlli effettuati lungo la catena distributiva si dovessero individuare delle **infrazioni**.

Analizziamo, a questo punto, le diverse fasi che si suggerisce di contemplare:

- 1) Pescato il prodotto con la draga idraulica, sarà effettuata la fase di prima vagliatura a bordo;
- 2) Il prodotto verrà insaccato e poi sbarcato nei porti individuati dai Consorzi e autorizzati dall'autorità marittima competente;
- 3) Effettuato lo sbarco, il prodotto verrà sottoposto ad una seconda vagliatura che sarà effettuata nelle strutture individuate dai consorzi stessi;
- 4) Effettuata la seconda vagliatura a terra, la regolarità del prodotto sarà certificata dagli stessi Consorzi;
- 5) Al motopesca verrà restituito il prodotto certificato sopra la taglia minima di riferimento per la conservazione;

- 6) Il prodotto sottotaglia che dovesse emergere dalla seconda vagliatura verrà trasferito, sempre sotto la responsabilità dei CoGeVo, nelle aree di ripopolamento identificate ai sensi dell'art.16 del Reg. CE 1967/2006;
- 7) Con la collaborazione degli istituti di ricerca di riferimento dei CoGeVo avverrà, infine, una successiva verifica dei risultati del ripopolamento (in termini di accrescimento), di sopravvivenza e di taglia minima.

Controllo

Si noterà che le fasi sopra descritte prevedono diverse forme di controllo e verifica. Va da sé, tuttavia, che le Autorità nazionali preposte (anzitutto il Corpo della Capitanerie, oltre agli altri organi di polizia) effettueranno il controllo dell'attività di pesca in tutte le fasi della procedura di cui sopra. In particolare, assicureranno controlli più intensi per il vaglio a terra e monitoreranno gli sforzi di trasferimento delle vongole sottomisura nelle aree di ripopolamento individuate all'uopo. La Direzione generale della Pesca Marittima del Mipaaf provvederà alla predisposizione di appositi piani di campionamento per effettuare l'analisi dei rischi (*risk analysis*).

Il **Piano Rigetti Vongole**, ferma restando la sua durata di tre anni, prevederà controlli periodici su base annuale sullo stato della risorsa: in particolare, saranno verificati gli **effetti del riposizionamento in mare** degli individui sottotaglia e l'affidabilità della selezione a terra. Ciò consentirà di apportare eventuali **revisioni** al piano, utili per la sua ottimizzazione.

Informazioni specifiche per una corretta valutazione del Piano dei Rigetti

1. L'attività delle **draghe idrauliche** è regolata attraverso il **Piano Nazionale di Gestione** istituito ai sensi dell'art. 19 del Reg. CE 1967/2006. Questo piano è stato adottato nel 2010 e successivamente **modificato** nel 2015 (Decreto 24 luglio 2015, Adozione del Piano Nazionale di Gestione per le Attività di pesca con il Sistema di draghe idrauliche e rastrelli da natante -15A06046 -GU Serie generale n.187 del 13- 8-2015).

Il piano comprende tutte le informazioni richieste dal Reg. CE 1967/2006, in particolare: l'obiettivo principale e gli obiettivi specifici, le definizioni di pesca e delle specie, i punti di riferimento, i piani di monitoraggio.

Il piano di gestione è disponibile presso il sito del Ministero (www.politicheagricole.it);

2. Le **misure di gestione** previste nel piano sono articolate in **3 livelli diversi**:
 - ✓ **Misure europee**
 - ✓ **Misure nazionali**
 - ✓ **Misure regionali e dei Compartimenti**

3. Il piano è attuato attraverso uno strumento di gestione consolidato che si fonda sulla istituzione dei CO.GE.VO. (ConSORZI di Gestione Vongole) a cui è affidata la gestione. Questo strumento è stato ampiamente studiato ed è considerato un **esempio di applicazione efficiente di una forma di autogestione**.

4. Gli **effetti positivi** del sistema possono essere, come noto, così sintetizzati:
 - ✓ **l'aumento dei valori delle quote** causato dal divieto di licenza e il costante aumento dei **profitti**;
 - ✓ la riduzione delle quantità raccolte a favore delle dimensioni e, in generale, la qualità della risorsa;
 - ✓ **l'eliminazione della tendenza** alla "*gara a chi pesca di più/corsa allo sfruttamento*" (En.: *race-to-fish*) e la concorrenza tra i pescatori nello stesso compartimento.

5. E' tuttavia importante considerare che il **punto più debole** nel sistema di gestione della pesca della specie *Chamelea gallina* è la **mancanza di misure adeguate** per affrontare le **crisi ambientali**, che ciclicamente si ripetono in tutti i Compartimenti del Mare Adriatico.

6. Le **competenze (poteri) e le attività** dei Consorzi sono definiti dalla **legge**. I COGEVO possono stabilire **misure supplementari** che devono essere **più restrittive rispetto alle misure europee e nazionali**. In particolare, hanno la possibilità di decidere:
 - ✓ Le procedure di controllo e sorveglianza;
 - ✓ La rotazione delle zone di pesca, al fine del ripopolamento delle aree;
 - ✓ Le chiusure temporanee e le altre eventuali restrizioni aggiuntive sui limiti decisi dall'autorità centrale.

7. Il **volume delle catture giornaliere** non riflette necessariamente l'abbondanza della risorsa, ma è anche legato alla dinamica dei prezzi e alla quantità di vongole commerciali disponibili e quella che sarà disponibile sul mercato nei mesi successivi.
8. Il **volume annuale degli sbarchi** per singolo consorzio è legato alle decisioni di gestione, salvo in situazioni dovute a fattori ambientali anomali (morie per varie cause).
9. L'aumento dei **prezzi** dagli anni '80 ad oggi (nel 1980, il prezzo medio delle vongole fresche sul mercato era 0,20 € kg, mentre ora è di circa 2,5 € / kg) non è legato all'eventuale esaurimento della *Chamelea gallina*, ma, al contrario, all'introduzione di politiche di mercato ben definite dai Consorzi. Questi ultimi riducono coscientemente la produzione per consentire la valorizzazione del prodotto. Inoltre, non vi è in realtà alcuna concorrenza con prodotti analoghi provenienti da altri mercati, perché il prodotto locale è principalmente consumato fresco, mentre il prodotto importato viene elaborato.
10. La riforma della **nuova PCP** ha introdotto l'**obbligo di sbarco**.

Per quanto riguarda la *C. gallina*, la misura in questione dovrebbe essere applicata **dal 1 gennaio 2017**, perché questa specie identifica e caratterizza l'attività di pesca della vongola in oggetto.

Tuttavia, l'articolo 15, comma 4, stabilisce che **l'obbligo di sbarco non si applica alle specie per le quali ci sono prove scientifiche che dimostrano alti tassi di sopravvivenza**, tenendo conto delle caratteristiche degli attrezzi, delle pratiche di pesca e dell'ecosistema.

Infatti, diversi **studi scientifici** e l'attuale pratica di pesca dimostrano che la *Chamelea gallina* ha un **elevato tasso di sopravvivenza** quando viene rilasciata in mare.

11. Come riportato nel Piano Italiano di Gestione per le **draghe**, e anche nello **studio del Parlamento europeo** (Commissione PECH) sulla Pesca delle Vongole (2016), i risultati confermano **che la *Chamelea gallina* raggiunge la maturità sessuale a dimensioni comprese tra 13 e 18 mm**. Le vongole adulte sono definite come esemplare con una dimensione maggiore di 18 mm di dimensione (pagine 14, 42, tabella 1, fonte: studio del Parlamento europeo sul settore Pesca delle Vongole - Il caso del Mare Adriatico, gennaio 2016).

12. Costituzione di un **riferimento minimo di conservazione**

Secondo l'articolo 15, comma 10 Reg. UE 1380/13, le dimensioni minime di riferimento per la conservazione possono essere impostate con l'obiettivo di garantire la protezione del **novellame** degli organismi marini. Sulla base delle prove scientifiche, si propone una Taglia Minima di Sbarco (En.: *MLS-Minimum Landing Size*) di **22 mm**. Questa taglia è **superiore del 22% rispetto alla dimensione della prima fase di maturità (18 mm)** ed è quindi **in linea e nel rispetto della maturità sessuale garantendo la sostenibilità dello sfruttamento delle risorse**.

13. Controllo ed esecuzione

Oltre alle norme in materia di controllo e di esecuzione già in atto, **specifiche attività di controllo** saranno attuate dalle autorità competenti per assicurare la corretta **applicazione e implementazione della seconda selezione** a dimensioni di sbarco e la chiusura delle aree di ripopolamento.

14. Monitoraggio

Il Piano Italiano di Gestione per le **draghe** include già informazioni dettagliate sul monitoraggio del piano e la definizione delle **responsabilità** tra i diversi attori (ConSORZI, amministrazione, istituti scientifici). In aggiunta a questa disposizione, ulteriori informazioni per una migliore attuazione del piano saranno garantite attraverso il programma nazionale per la **raccolta dei dati** della pesca nell'ambito del Reg. UE 199/08 (DCF). Attualmente, il programma nazionale prevede già la raccolta sulle attività di pesca (dati di attività, dati economici, distribuzione dello sforzo di pesca) e le specie (parametri biologici al livello 17 GSA). Nel futuro NWP, sotto la rivista DCF, le attività di **raccolta dei dati saranno ulteriormente intensificate**.

Compatibilmente con le disposizioni di provvedimenti futuri (EUMAP) e con le risorse finanziarie, **indagini supplementari**, sia nel donatore che nelle zone beneficiarie, saranno condotte a livello distrettuale.



*Ministero delle politiche agricole
alimentari e forestali*

DIPARTIMENTO DELLE POLITICHE COMPETITIVE,
DELLA QUALITA' AGROALIMENTARE, IPPICHE E DELLA PESCA
DIREZIONE GENERALE DELLA PESCA MARITTIMA
E DELL'ACQUACOLTURA

- In order to strengthen the Clam Fishery Discard Plan, we accepted and agreed upon the **renunciation of tolerance by weight of the 5 %** minimum reference size, subject to the minimum reference size of **22 mm**.
- The **restocking areas** indicated by the individual management Consortia for the repositioning of the undersized product, which is screened and checked on the ground (after landing), must first be communicated to the relevant local Maritime Authority responsible for that district. As in the case of other usual management operations, it is current practice that the local Maritime Authority is in charge of issuing a specific Decree introducing fishing bans with hydraulic dredges; local authorities will also have the task of enforcing the measures taken by the competent body.
- The **undersized fraction**, deriving from the second screening/check on the ground (sieving) once the clams are landed, must be transferred live to the restocking areas, which are identified from time to time by the management consortia, in accordance with art.2 paragraph 1 letter e of the Decree 515 of December 1, 1998, which provides for the consortium to propose to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies a series of technical measures concerning, among other points, the establishment of restocking areas, according to a criterion of rotation aimed at ensuring the utmost environmental sustainability, according to art. 16 of Reg. EC 1967/2006. In restocking areas, and until the clams do not reach the legal size, all fishing activities are prohibited.

- To strengthen the **control capacity** by each single management Consortium and to ensure compliance with the **ban on fishing in the restocking areas**. Control systems on the boats position with hydraulic dredges based on GPS location will be used. These control systems are able to record all the phases related to the activities of the fleet and have the ability to issue a rapid alert for the boats that do not respect these prohibitions. Consider that **geo-referenced control systems** are used and are operated with the **GPS**, in the maritime Districts of the Upper Adriatic. Using the GPS control system of **hydraulic dredges** operating for each individual consortium of management, one can also know the number of hydraulic dredges operating daily, optimize procedures and the organization of **screening operations of the product on-the-ground / after landing** (which is carried out by the management Consortia), manage and control **seeding operations** of undersized clams in previously identified sea areas.
- The **on-the-ground selection** (after landing) of the fished product (catches) introduces a key element of **accountability** in relation to the hierarchies leading the Management Consortia, especially in the context of absence of tolerance on the minimum size. Thanks to the rules on the traceability of the product, based on current standards, the individuals in charge ensuring compliance with size limit may be prosecuted **criminally or administratively**, in the event that, under subsequent checks carried out along the distribution chain, the control authority should observe **infractions**.

It is confirmed that the phases of operations will be composed as follows:

- 1) Once the product is fished/caught with hydraulic dredge, it follows the phase of the first sieving on-board;
- 2) The product is bagged and landed at landing sites authorized by the management consortia;
- 3) Once landed, the product is subject to the second screening (sieving) in the facilities identified and managed by the consortia themselves;
- 4) Following the second on-the-ground sieving/screening, performed under liability of the CoGeVo, this same authority is in charge of certifying the regulated product.
- 5) Return for storage of the certified product above the minimum reference size to the fishing motorboat (vessel, It.: *motopesca*);

6) Under responsibility of CoGeVo, the transfer of the undersized product is effected following the second screening/sieving in the areas identified for restocking, under Article 16 of Reg. EC 1967/2006, in accordance with the procedures established by the management consortia.

7) Subsequent verification of the results of restocking operations, in terms of growth, survival and minimum size with the support and cooperation of the relevant CoGeVo's research institutes.

- **Under all circumstances, the national Authorities carry out the fishery control activities at all stages of the above described procedure. In particular, they are due to ensure more intensive checks for the on-the-ground screening/sieving and selection (after landing), and will monitor the transfer efforts of undersized clams to the specific restocking areas. The Ministry of Agriculture - Directorate-general for Fisheries and Aquaculture will ensure the provision of appropriate sampling plans for the evaluation of the risk analysis.**
- Since the **Clam Fishery Discard Plan** introduces an **innovative** feature in the management of the clam resource, and in consideration of its three-year duration, it will be provided for regular checks on the state of the resource on an annual basis, to monitor the **effects of the repositioning** of undersized individuals **in the sea**, as well as on the reliability/validity of the on-the-ground selection (after landing). This will allow to make potential **revisions** to the Plan, and as such, this will result as particularly useful for its optimization.

Specific information and key observations relevant to the Discard Plan

1. The activity of **hydraulic dredges** is regulated through a **National Management Plan** established according to Article 19 of EC Reg. 1967/2006. This plan was adopted in 2010 and further **amended** in 2015 (Decreto 24 luglio 2015, Adozione del Piano di gestione nazionale per le attività di pesca con il sistema di draghe idrauliche e rastrelli da natante - 15A06046-GU Serie Generale n.187 del 13-8-2015).

The plan includes all the information required by EC Reg. 1967/2006, in particular: the main objective and the specific objectives, definitions of fisheries and species, reference points, monitoring plans. The management plan is available at the Ministry website.

2. The **management measures** foreseen in the plan are articulated at **3 different levels**:
 - ✓ **European measures**
 - ✓ **National measures**
 - ✓ **Regional and districts measures**

3. The plan is implemented through a consolidated management tool based on the establishment of the CO.GE.VO. (Consorti di Gestione Vongole). This tool has been widely studied and it is considered an **example of efficient application of a complete self-management approach**.

4. The **positive effects** of the adopted regulatory system are:
 - ✓ the **increase in quota values** caused by the license ban and the constant increase in profits; the reduction in the quantities harvested in favour of the size and, in general, the quality of the resource;
 - ✓ the **elimination of the “race to fish”** tendency and competition between fishermen in the same district.

5. It is nevertheless important to consider that the **weakest point** in the division management system is its **lack of adequate measures** for facing **environmental crises**, which cyclically recur in all districts of the Adriatic Sea.

6. The **powers and activities** of the Consortia are defined **by law**. The COGEVO may establish **additional measures** that are to be **more restrictive compared to the European and national measures**. In particular, they are entitled to decide, among themselves, about the following elements:
 - ✓ control and surveillance procedures;
 - ✓ rotation of fishing areas, restocking areas;

 - ✓ temporary closures and any other restrictions on the limitations which are still decided by the central authority.

The **shift of power** from the Ministry to the Consortia is rather **substantial**, even if the basic management measures are still centrally determined, with the **exception** of those cases in which the Consortia establish more restrictive limits.

7. The **volume of the daily catches** does not reflect necessarily the abundance of the resource, but it is also related to the trend in prices and with the amount of commercial clams available and those that will become commercially available in the following months.
8. The annual **volume of landings** by individual consortia is linked with the management decisions, except in situations related to anomalous environmental factors (die-offs for various causes) that are also different among the maritime compartments.
9. The increase in **prices** from the '80s till now (in 1980 the average price of fresh clams on the market was 0.20 € kg while now it is around 2.5 €/kg) is not linked to the eventual depletion of the *C. gallina* but, on the contrary, to the definition of clear market policies by the Consortia which consciously reduce the production to allow a valorization of the product. In addition, there is actually no competition with similar products coming from elsewhere because the local product is mainly consumed fresh, while the imported product is processed.
10. The **reformed CFP** introduced the **landing obligation**.

Regarding the *C. gallina* this provision should be applied **by 1st January 2017** because this specie identifies the fishery.

However, article 15 comma 4 states that the **landing obligation shall not apply to species for which scientific evidence demonstrates high survival rates**, taking into account the characteristics of the gear, of the fishing practices and of the ecosystem.

Several **scientific studies** and the current fishing practice demonstrate that *C. gallina* has a **high survival rate** when released into the sea.

11. As reported in the Italian Management Plan for **dredgers** and also in the *European Parliament study* (PECH Committee) *on the Clam Fishery sector* (2016), **scientific studies show that *C. gallina* reaches sexual maturity at sizes between 13 and 18 mm**. Adult clams are defined as specimen >18 mm in size (pages 14, 42, table 1, source: *European Parliament study on the Clam Fishery sector – The case of the Adriatic Sea, January 2016*).

12. As per the **derogation from the landing obligation**, it is proposed as follows: the LO should **not be applied to clams fisheries** (hydraulic dredges targeting *Chamelea gallina*) because of high survival rates.

The **discarding process** should take place in **two steps**:

- **First selection on board.**

This selection cannot be optimal because of the technological difficulties of selecting the clams on board due to several factors: the vibrating screens on board of the fishing boat have selection ranges that include several size classes, the movement of vessels at sea, the limited size of the vibrating screens.

- **Second selection at the landing sites** under the responsibility of the management Consortia (CoGeVo).

The **undersized fraction** resulting from the second selection will be transferred live in restocking areas, identified, from time to time, by the Consortia and approved by the Ministry, which may introduce by law **technical measures** concerning, among other aspects, the **creation of restocking areas**, according to a **criterion of rotation** to ensure better **environmental sustainability**.

13. In **restocking areas** and until the clams will not reach the legal size, it is **prohibited** to conduct any fishing activity.

14. Establishment of a **minimum conservation reference**

According to article 15 comma 10 Reg. EU 1380/13, minimum conservation reference sizes may be established with the aim of ensuring the protection of **juveniles** of marine organisms. On the basis of the scientific evidence, it is proposed a MLS of **22 mm**. This size is **22% higher than the size at first maturity (18 mm)** and it is thus **in line with the sexual maturity to ensure sustainability of resource exploitation**.

15. **Control and enforcement**

In addition to the rules on control and enforcement already in place, **specific control activities** will be implemented by the competent authorities to ensure the correct **implementation of the second selection** at landing size and the closure of the restocking areas.

16. Monitoring

The Italian Management Plan for **dredgers** already includes detailed information on the monitoring of the plan and the definition of the **responsibilities** among the different actors (Consortia, administration, scientific institutes). In addition to this provision, additional information for a better implementation of the plan will be ensured through the national program for fisheries **data collection** under EU Reg. 199/08 (DCF). Currently, the National Program already includes the collection on the fisheries (activity data, economic data, fishing effort distribution) and the species (biological parameters at 17 GSA level). In the future NWP, under the revised DCF, the **data collection activities will be further increased.**

Compatibly with the future legal provisions (EUMAP) and the financial resources, additional **surveys** in both the donor and receiving areas will be implemented at district level.

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