



Analysis and evolution of the trawling fleet **in the coast of Murcia**

Council Regulation (EC) No. 1967/2006 of December 21, concerning management measures for the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean Sea, provides in Article 13, paragraph 11, that member states may authorize and communicate to the Commission, before September 30, 2007, exceptions to the minimum distances to the coast established for trawling fleet (range between 0.7 and 1.5 nautical miles) under certain conditions, including that do not have a significant effect on the marine environment.

This document carries out a study on the characterization of the trawl fleet in the Murcia region, in order to support the request for a regulated exception in the previous section.

The Murcian trawl fleet, despite not being one of the largest in the Spanish Mediterranean fishing ground, has a great importance due to the socioeconomic value it brings to the region, a value that is obtained, among other things, from the economic value of its catches, which contributes to providing economic stability to the ports of the region. Its activity is mainly focused on the Murcian coastline, making use of the closest fishing grounds and splitting the boats between the ports of Águilas, Cartagena, Mazarrón and San Pedro del Pinatar.

Due to the orographic configuration of the area, which is, in general, very steep and with a very limited coastal platform, great depths can be reached in areas very close to the coast. For this reason, Murcian trawlers, which generally have an artisanal character, present catches from coastal and deep-sea fisheries.

The fleet works under 50 meters, since this condition is guaranteed by the national regulations itself. Spanish legislation for bottom trawling and specifically Article 10 of Royal Decree 1440/1999, of September 10, regulates the activity of bottom trawling in the Mediterranean National Fishing Area, establishes the prohibition of fishing in bottoms of less than 50 meters, regardless of the distances to the coast, without prejudice to the direct applicability of the European regulations.

1. Fleet register and main ports

An analysis of the evolution that the Murcian trawl fleet for the past 15 years has been carried out, it can be observed in the table below, a decrease in the number of active vessels, going from the 33 units that operated in 2005 to the 23 units currently fishing in this area. This has meant a reduction of 30% of the fleet.



The port that has been most affected has been Águilas, which has lost four ships, followed by Cartagena and Mazarrón, which have lost three ships each. (Table 1)

Although these data seem small, since the Region of Murcia is one of the Autonomous Communities with fewer kilometres of coastline within the Mediterranean coast, the total loss of 10 vessels can be considered significant.

Another way to visualize the reduction in activity in this area is through an analysis of the evolution of the total GTs by port, which decreases at the same time as the census of ships, and which demonstrates the artisanal nature of this fleet.

2. Fleet activity

The activity of the fleet is based on daily trips, which do not exceed 12 hours at sea, this local activity of extraction shunt in extraction of very fresh product with high value in local markets. They usually leave at dawn, and return for sale at the fish market between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

The activity of the fleet has been studied through the days of fishing by analyzing the VMS communications of the vessels. The data has been refined to leave only the positions in fishing speed.

In relation to the study of the evolution of the fishing effort developed by the vessels of this region, we can observe a reduction in terms of days of activity at sea of nearly 50% in the last 15 years (Table 3), reducing by 8138 days of activity in 2005, to 4106 in 2020.

This reduction is more pronounced in the first 10 years, from 2005 to 2010, with a more gradual reduction in the last 5 years as a result of the stabilization of the fleet.

3. Conclusions

The reduction in number of bottom trawling vessels on the Murcian coast has been marked significant in recent years, producing a reduction in activity in terms of fishing days, close to 50%. The current situation of the Murcia trawl fleet is stable, and together with the favorable scientific evaluations of the area, it can be stated that the current fishing pressure will not cause any environmental deterioration if the requested exceptions are approved.



Tabla 1

Evolución del número de buques																
PURTO BASE	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Águilas	13	15	13	13	12	12	12	12	11	10	10	10	9	9	9	9
Cartagena	10	11	10	11	9	8	8	8	9	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Mazarron	9	8	9	9	9	8	8	8	6	5	5	5	5	5	6	6
San Pedro del Pinatar	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total general	33	35	33	34	31	29	29	29	27	23	23	23	22	22	23	23

Tabla 2

Evolución de los GTs																
PUERTO_BASE	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Águilas	664,32	700,47	604,91	604,91	563,41	536,87	536,87	554,37	492,49	459,99	459,99	459,99	455,93	469,27	469,27	469,27
Cartagena	679,57	748,32	693,32	764,38	679,16	528,89	528,89	528,89	563,96	480,04	480,04	480,04	480,04	480,04	480,04	480,04
Mazarron	325,21	302,21	333,15	333,15	333,15	320,93	320,93	320,93	202,95	154,16	154,16	154,16	154,16	154,16	173,72	173,72
San Pedro del Pinatar	75,02	75,02	75,02	75,02	75,02	75,02	75,02	75,02	75,02	75,02	75,02	75,02	75,02	75,02	75,02	75,02
Total general	1744,12	1826,02	1706,4	1777,46	1650,74	1461,71	1461,71	1479,21	1334,42	1169,21	1169,21	1169,21	1165,15	1178,49	1198,05	1198,05

Tabla 3

EVOLUCIÓN ESFUERZO PESQUERO EN DÍAS DE PESCA																
AÑO	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
DÍAS DE ACTIVIDAD	8138	9291	9091	8497	8336	8507	8586	7032	7203	5396	4884	4713	4516	4423	4541	4106