

## **STECF PLENARY MEETING 23-02**

**10 JULY 2023 (START 9:00H) – 14 JULY 2023 (END: 16:00H), BRUSSELS**

### **Terms of Reference (03/06/2023)**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

[Does not belong to the ToRs but is listed here to avoid confusion with the section numbering when editing the plenary report.]

## **2. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

[Does not belong to the ToRs but is listed here to avoid confusion with the section numbering when editing the plenary report.]

## **3. INFORMATION TO THE PLENARY**

### **4. STECF INITIATIVES**

During PLEN 23-01, an open discussion was held on STECF's "way of working". This was a first discussion on identifying any improvements that could be made to STECF. A range of issues were discussed including preparations for plenary, reporting and procedural issues. It is planned to hold a follow-up session during PLEN 23-02 to continue the discussion from PLEN 23-01. Additionally, the Committee will identify "STECF own initiatives" relating to policy issues that are considered of interest and importance.

## **5. ASSESSMENT OF STECF EWG REPORTS**

### **5.1. WG 23-02: ASSESSMENT AND ADVICE FOR NON-QUOTA STOCKS**

**DG MARE focal person:** Paulo Vasconcelos, Ana Leocadio (C5)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

**Possible presenter:**

**Request to the STECF:**

STECF is requested to review the findings of the STECF Working Group meeting and make any appropriate comments and recommendations.

In particular, STECF is invited to express its opinion regarding the future management of the king scallops fishery in the Channel.

**5.2. EWG 22-03 AND EWG 22-07: ANNUAL ECONOMIC REPORT OF THE EU FISHING FLEET I AND II**

**DG MARE focal person:** Angel Calvo Santos (A4)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

**Possible presenter:**

**Request to the STECF:**

STECF is requested to evaluate the findings of the STECF Expert Working Group in particular 1) on the specific section for the fuel prices and energy consumption indicators of the EU fishing fleets. 2) on the methodology for opportunity cost of capital used on the AER.

STECF is requested to evaluate the findings of the STECF Expert Working Group meeting and make any appropriate comments and recommendations.

**5.3. EWG 23-05: FDI METHODOLOGY**

**DG MARE focal person:** Evelien Ranshuysen (D3), Paulo Vasconcelos, Agnieszka Sadowska (C5), Ilaria Vielmini, Christoph Priebe (C1), Leonie O'Dowd (C3)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

**Possible presenter:**

**Request to the STECF:**

STECF is requested to review the report of the STECF Expert Working Group meeting, in particular on:

- The suggested necessary steps by the EWG to transfer the biological data from the Mediterranean and Black Sea data call into the FDI format.
- The necessity of any outstanding points on data methodology needs for the FDI database.

This EWG is linked to STECF EWG 23-10 taking place in September. In case the STECF has points or remarks on preparation that is running in parallel to the PLEN on this other EWG they are invited to note them down.

#### **5.4 EWG 23-08: EVALUATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORTS FOR DATA COLLECTION AND DATA TRANSMISSION ISSUES**

**DG MARE focal person:** Monika Sterczewska (C3)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

**Possible presenter:**

#### **Request to the STECF:**

STECF is requested to evaluate the findings of the STECF Expert Working Group meeting and make any appropriate comments and recommendations.

### **6. ADDITIONAL REQUESTS SUBMITTED TO THE STECF PLENARY BY THE COMMISSION**

#### **6.1. ASSESSMENT OF A SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF VULNERABLE MARINE ECOSYSTEMS**

**DG Mare focal person:** Caroline Alibert (C1)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

#### **Background provided by the Commission**

The **Deep-sea Access Regulation**<sup>1</sup> is governing access to deep-sea fishing and setting conditions for protecting "Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems" (VMEs) in EU and international waters. The Deep-sea Access Regulation aims to establish a sustainable exploitation of deep-sea stocks while reducing the environmental impact of these fisheries and preventing significant adverse impacts on VMEs, and to improve the information base for scientific assessment, through data collection.

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<sup>1</sup> [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/2336](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2016 establishing specific conditions for fishing for deep-sea stocks in the north-east Atlantic and provisions for fishing in international waters of the north-east Atlantic and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 2347/2002.

On 15 September 2022, the Commission has adopted the **Implementing Act (EU) 2022/1614** determining the existing deep-sea fishing areas and establishing a list of areas where vulnerable marine ecosystems are known to occur or are likely to occur<sup>2</sup>.

The Implementing act is based on ICES advice (final advice in Jan. 2021 and coordinates in Feb. 2022)<sup>3</sup>, which aims to balance the protection of VMEs with the continuation of fishing activities under **Scenario 2 – option 1**. A list of **87 areas** where VMEs occur or are likely to occur in EU waters has been established in the Implementing Act, based on the ICES advice. The Deep-sea Access Regulation provides that fishing with all bottom gears shall be prohibited in all listed areas below a depth of 400 meters.

As per article 9(6) of the framework Regulation (EU) 2016/2336, the Commission “*shall review the list annually on the basis of advice received from the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries and, where appropriate, amend the list by means of implementing acts. The Commission may remove an area from the list provided that it determines, on the basis of an impact assessment and after consulting the competent scientific advisory body, that there is sufficient evidence to indicate that VMEs are not present, or that appropriate conservation and management measures have been adopted which ensure that significant adverse impacts on VMEs in that area are prevented.*”

On 18 April 2023, ICES released its second “**Advice on areas where Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) are known to occur or are likely to occur in EU waters**” where it presented 5 updated scenarios taking into account data submitted by EU Member States in the context of the VMS-VME data call of 2022 (2009-2021)<sup>4</sup>. The new ICES advice proposes to list more areas for VMEs protection, between 102 up to 115 areas against 87 areas listed in the Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/1614. Overall, this corresponds to a total area size of 9 752 km<sup>2</sup> up to 14 885 km<sup>2</sup>, compared to 16 419 km<sup>2</sup> under the current Regulation.

### **Request to the STECF**

STECF is requested to provide an opinion to inform the Commission’s possible review of the list of areas, as per Article 9(6) of the Deep-sea Access Regulation (EU) 2016/2336.

In particular, STECF is requested to review the results of two ad-hoc contracts, prepared to facilitate the final opinion:

1. Step 1.1 – GIS analysis
2. Step 2 – Scenarios for the Socio-economic Analysis

Based on the above, the opinion should be composed of:

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<sup>2</sup> [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2022/1614](#) of 15 September 2022 determining the existing deep-sea fishing areas and establishing a list of areas where vulnerable marine ecosystems are known to occur or are likely to occur

<sup>3</sup> [ICES. 2021](#). EU Request to advise on the list of areas where VMEs are known to occur or are likely to occur and on the existing deep-sea fishing areas (ref. (EU)2016/2336.).

[ICES. 2022](#). EU request for a Technical Service to provide data output of the ICES 2021 advice on the deep-sea access regulation (ref. (EU)2016/2336) as coordinates for EU waters area only.

<sup>4</sup> [ICES. 2023](#). Advice on areas where Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) are known to occur or are likely to occur in EU waters.

- **Analysis of the EU fleet economic performance:** Match the fleet segments with FDI and most recent AER data to analyse the changes in value of landings under existing VMEs closures, under new closures and under re-openings of areas as per ICES advice 2023, with profit indicators (net and gross) and gross value added. Collect findings and recommendations on effort reallocation (scenarios), threshold of landings to rebalance segment, gears specificity and employment dimension, notably estimates of jobs at risk (scenarios). The results of this analysis should be presented by fleet segments, MS and maritime sea basin (if possible).
- **Summary of assumptions and limitations for this analysis** (data resolution, the potential scope for fleets to divert activities to other areas, to adopt alternative sustainable fishing techniques or to benefit from potential spill-over effect of the recovered fish stocks, etc.).
- Potential positive socio-economic value to society in terms of **gains of biodiversity** due to the closures.

## 6.2. REVIEW OF AN EXEMPTION FOR BALTIC SALMON

**DG Mare focal person:** Maria Aira Martin, Antoine Kopp (C1)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

### Background provided by the Commission

In October 2021, BaltFish adopted a joint recommendation to extend and prolong the exemption from the landing obligation for certain Baltic salmon fisheries on grounds of high survivability. PLEN 22-03 assessed the initial joint recommendation. Subsequently, BaltFish provided additional information which PLEN 23-01 assessed. Since then, additional information, notably on the level of discards, was provided by Member States concerned. The STECF is requested to assess that additional information.

### Request to the STECF

STECF is requested to assess the new document provided by Finland and Sweden.

Specifically, the STECF is requested to:

- Comment on the quality of the new evidence and its relation with the information submitted to PLEN 22-03 and PLEN 23-01
- Assess whether this new supporting information affects or changes the conclusions issued by STECF PLEN 22-03 and PLEN 23-01, notably:
  - missing quantitative evidence on the discard rate
  - the relevance of the 8% maximum discard threshold
  - control and enforcement of the exemption
  - quality of the information supplied and need for further supporting information

### **6.3. ASSESSMENT OF AD-HOC CONTRACT TO ASSESS DATA-LIMITED PARAMETERS FOR THE CALCULATION OF THE INDICATORS TO ASSESS THE BALANCE BETWEEN FLEET CAPACITY AND FISHING OPPORTUNITIES**

**DG MARE focal person:** Antonios Stamoulis, Kenneth Patterson (D3)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

#### **Background provided by the Commission**

The Common Fisheries Policy relies on scientific advice for fish stock management; it also relies on information on the state of fish stocks in the management of fleet's fishing capacity. The way in which the balance between fleet's fishing capacity and the available fishing opportunities is assessed is set out in the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council "Guidelines for the analysis of the balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities according to Art 22 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council on the Common Fisheries Policy" (COM/2014/0545 final). Although assessments are generally available for most stocks in EU waters where TACs are set, this is often not the case for stocks which are not TAC-managed and/or are data limited and thus full analytical assessments are not available. This has led to certain gaps in the coverage of the indicators described in the aforementioned Communication. In particular, frequent data gaps occur for the SHI indicator described in the guidelines.

According to the most recent STECF report (total segments vs segments for which the indicator was calculated) the SHI coverage is the following:

*North Atlantic (116/324) 36%*

*Med and Black Seas (106/153) 70%*

*Other Fishing Regions and French Outermost Regions (14/36) 39%*

Two ad hoc contracts were carried out ahead of PLEN 23-02 to review available proxies or alternative methodologies for calculating  $F/F_{msy}$ , that could in turn, facilitate reasonable estimations of the SHI indicator for those areas and stocks where full analytical assessments are not available (including: the review a number of key alternative stock assessment methodologies; assess the suitability of such proxies for the purpose of estimating the balance between fleet capacity and fishing opportunities according to the method set out in the Commission Guidelines; provide recommendations and recommend criteria for admitting values from specific model fits to the SHI calculation) and how the annual fleet reports prepared by the Member States using these methodologies can feed seamlessly into the tasks of the EWG 23-13 on Balance Capacity that shall take place in autumn 2023.

The alternative  $F_{msy}$  calculations are not intended for any purposes other than demonstrating the balance between fleet capacity and available fishing opportunities or propose new or alternative indicators. Furthermore, they are not intended to be used as an alternative where a more accurate value for  $F_{msy}$  has been provided.

#### **Request to the STECF**

STECF is requested to review and make any appropriate comments and recommendations on the report and its findings.

#### **6.4. ASSESSMENT OF TECHNICAL MEASURES TO REDUCE CETACEAN BY-CATCH IN THE BAY OF BISCAY**

**DG Mare focal person:** Mindaugas Kisieliauskas, Ilaria Vielmini (C1)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

##### **Background provided by the Commission**

A preliminary joint recommendation was submitted by the South-Western Waters group on the 26th of October 2020, as a response to the ICES advice of 26 May 2020. This joint recommendation provided for:

1. the equipment of mid-water pelagic trawls (OTM, PTM) and demersal twin trawls (PTB) with acoustic deterrent device in ICES subarea VIII and demersal trawls (OTB) in ICES subarea VIIIC all year long;
2. the obligation for all EU fishing vessels to report the incidental by-catches in the logbook, with an encouragement to fishermen to engage in the tagging of dead common dolphins, in association with scientific institutes;
3. the increased data collection on incidental catch through observations at sea or camera on board, with a minimum of 2% of the total effort of each fleet of concern should be observed (by observers or CCTV);
4. the improvement of the knowledge on the state of the common dolphin population and stranding events, via a surveillance program and the creation of a European network to monitor strandings
5. the development and testing of new technical solutions to reduce protected by-catches.

STECF assessed this joint recommendation during its spring plenary 2021 but considered that the measures proposed in the JR were insufficient to reduce by-catches of dolphins in the Bay of Biscay.

No delegated act had therefore been adopted by the European Commission on this basis.

The current joint recommendation contains a new proposal regarding management measures to reduce accidental bycatches of small cetaceans in the Bay of Biscay.

SWW MS have outlined a JR defining technical measures to minimise small-cetaceans by-catch in the Bay of Biscay.

This new JR is drafted starting from the 2020 one with updated reference to the 2023 ICES report and most recent data on stranding.

##### **Request to the STECF**

STECF is requested to review and make any appropriate comments and recommendations on the proposed technical measure and their effectiveness in reducing the by-catch of small-cetaceans.

In particular, STECF is requested to assess if the measures proposed in the submitted JR are adequate to ensure that by-catch of dolphin is minimize compared to the version assessed by STECF in 2021 and that the current proposed measures would provide the required protection of common dolphin in the Bay of Biscay.

#### **6.5. REVIEW OF THE AD HOC CONTRACTS TO FOLLOW-UP ON THE STECF EWG 23-01 CONCERNING CLOSURE AREAS TO PROTECT JUVENILES AND ALL DEMERSAL STOCKS IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN SEA**

**DG Mare focal person:** Anne Cécile Dragon (D1)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

**Possible presenter:** tbd

##### **Background provided by the Commission**

Two ad-hoc contractors were requested to finalise the work started in February 2023 as preparatory work to facilitate the closure areas elements of work of EWG 23-01 (in relation to ToR 2). The work has been conducted based on the complete time series of MEDITS data 1994 to 2021.

The ad-hoc contractors were requested to update the MEDISEH analysis and finalize a short report including details and GIS layers on the spatio-temporal distributions of both, juveniles and spawners, for European hake, Blue and Red shrimp, Red mullet and if possible Norway lobster, Giant red shrimp, Deep-water rose shrimp to be used during the next EWG on the West Med.

##### **Request to the STECF**

STECF is requested to analyse the results of the ad hoc contracts in terms of quality and level of details for the evaluation of closure areas in the West Med as well as in terms of methodology, in case of future similar work. To help STECF review, background documents including previous work on the topic and STECF EWG 23-01 report are available.

STECF is requested to review and make any appropriate comments and recommendations on the report and its findings, taking into account that as regards the French maturity data in Table C of the DCF, they have not been provided since 2012, i.e. since the MEDITS group added the table E to the format. Thus, at the time, info-maturities were migrated into table C. However, a process of retrieving them in "generic" format should be finalised by next autumn.

## **6.6. FOLLOW-UP OF EWG 23-01: WEST MED ASSESSMENTS AND CLOSURE AREAS**

**DG Mare focal person:** Anne Cécile Dragon (D1)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

**Possible presenter:**

### **Background provided by the Commission**

In adopting the Western Mediterranean Multiannual Management Plan, Member States agreed to Article 11.1, alternatively Article 11.2, that aims at protecting juveniles of hake. All three concerned Member States also adopted Article 11.3 and agreed to establish other closure areas by 17 July 2021 and on the basis of the best available scientific advice, where there is evidence of a high concentration of juvenile fish, below the minimum conservation reference size, and of spawning grounds of demersal stocks, in particular for the stocks concerned.

STECF PLEN 23-01 and STECF EWG 23-01 are the latest reviews the proposals of closures (placement and period) submitted by Spain and determine their efficiency to protect juveniles of hake, as planned in Article 11.2. However, in view of Article 11.3, this review should be expanded to juveniles and spawners of all demersal species covered by the West Med MAP and account for fishing effort displacement.

### **Request to the STECF**

STECF is requested to review the closure proposals (placement and period) developed by Spain in Catalonia and determine their efficiency to protect both juveniles and spawners of all demersal species covered by the West Med MAP and accounting for fishing effort displacement. To provide an order of magnitude of the closure efficiency, the proposed closure areas should aim at reducing about 20% of the bycatch of each target species in GSA 6. In case the proposed closures are not meeting this criterion, the EWG is to propose alternative closures (placement and period) for Spain.

## **6.7. FOLLOW-UP OF EWG 21-13: WEST MED ASSESSMENTS. EVALUATION OF BASELINES**

**DG Mare focal person:** Anne Cécile Dragon (D1)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

**Possible presenter:**

### **Background provided by the Commission**

In adopting the Western Mediterranean Multiannual Management Plan, Member States agreed to:

- Article 7.3.b that states: *"for the second to the fifth year of the implementation of the plan, the maximum allowable fishing effort shall be reduced by a maximum of 30 % during that period. The fishing effort decrease **may be supplemented with any relevant technical or other conservation measures adopted in accordance with Union law, in order to achieve the FMSY by 1 January 2025.**"*
- Article 7.5 that states: *"Where the best available scientific advice shows significant catches of a particular stock **with fishing gear other than trawls**, maximum allowable fishing effort may be set for such particular gear on the basis of such scientific advice."*

STECF EWG 21-01 and EWG 22-02 have looked at the impact of other fishing gear on the fishing mortality of demersal stocks. STECF EWG 22-09 and STECF EWG 22-11 have assessed demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean and evaluated the biological and socio-economic impacts of various management scenarios. However, in view of Article 7.5, this review should be completed, based on work done in STECF PLEN 21-03, with the calculation of a baseline for fishing gear other than trawls (longliners and netters as per STECF EWG 21-01) calculated as the average of fishing days per year, per fleet segment and per Member States between 2015 and 2017, the legal reference period in the western Mediterranean multi-annual management plan. If other data are available, such as length of nets or number of hooks, a baseline for 2015-2017 could also be calculated with those.

To facilitate the work on this ToR, STECF experts could build on existing R scripts developed during PLEN 21-03 for a similar ToR, as well as on figures of catch compositions developed during STECF EWG 22-02 on longliners.

### **Request to the STECF**

STECF is requested to determine a baseline for longliners and netters based on the DCF data in fishing days for the reference period 2015-2017 and, if possible, in lengths of nets and/or number of hooks.

## **6.8. REVIEW OF A NATIONAL MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR BOAT SEINES IN CERTAIN TERRITORIAL WATERS OF SPAIN (BALEARIC)**

**DG Mare focal person:** Anne Cécile Dragon (D1)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

**Possible presenter:** tbd

### **Background provided by the Commission**

In November 2021, the Spanish Administration transmitted a scientific study, supporting elements and video data in relation to the derogation from Council Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006 as regards the minimum distance from the coast and the minimum sea depth for boat seines fishing for transparent and Ferrer's gobies (*Aphia minuta* and *Pseudaphia ferreri*) and Lowbody picarel (*Spicara smaris*) in certain territorial waters of Spain (Balearic Islands). STECF experts in Spring Plenary 2022 evaluated that information.

In January and June 2023, the Spanish Administration provided updated monitoring reports of the boat seine fisheries in certain territorial waters of Spain (Balearic). The current derogation will expire on 30 April 2023.

### **Request to the STECF**

Based on STECF assessment in spring 2022, the one in spring 2023 and on the additional supporting documents sent by Spain in June 2023, STECF is requested to review and make any appropriate comments and recommendations on the monitoring and reporting associated to the on-going management plan for the boat seine fisheries in Balearic waters and make recommendation for a new management plan.

In particular, STECF is requested to:

**TOR 1.** Advise and assess how the management plan could adequate elements in terms of:

#### **1.1. The description of the fisheries**

- Biological characteristics and state of the exploited resources with reference in particular to long-term yields.
- Description of the fishing pressure and measures to accomplish a sustainable exploitation of the main target stocks.
- Data on catches (landings and discards) of the species concerned, fishing effort and abundance indices such as catch-per-unit-effort (or CPUE).
- If possible, catch composition in terms of size distribution.
- Information on the social and economic impact of the measures proposed.
- Potential impact of the fishing gear on the marine environment with particular interest on protected habitats (i.e. seagrass bed, coralligenous habitat and maërl bed);

#### **1.2. Objectives, safeguards and conservation/technical measures**

- Objectives that are consistent with the objectives set out in Article 2 and with the relevant provisions of Articles 6 of CFP Regulation and quantifiable targets, such as fishing mortality rates and total biomass.
- Objectives for conservation and technical measures to be taken in order to achieve the targets set out in Article 15 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, and measures designed to avoid and reduce, as far as possible, unwanted catches.
- Measures proportionate to the objectives, the targets and the expected time frame.
- Safeguards to ensure that quantifiable targets are met, as well as remedial actions, where needed, including situations where the deteriorating quality of data or non-availability places the sustainability of the main stocks of the fishery at risk.
- Other conservation measures, in particular measures to gradually eliminate discards, taking into account the best available scientific advice or to minimise the negative impact of fishing on the ecosystem.

#### **1.3. Other aspects:**

- Quantifiable indicators for periodic monitoring and assessment of progress in achieving the objectives of the plan.

**TOR 2.** Evaluate whether the following conditions set by the MEDREG and Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 are fulfilled:

## **2.1 Derogation to the distance from the coast (Article 13 – Paragraphs 5, 9 and 10)**

There are particular geographical constraints, such as the limited size of the continental shelf along the entire coastline;

- The fisheries have any significant impact on the marine environment;
- The fisheries involve a limited number of vessels and do not contain any increase in the fishing effort;
- The fisheries cannot be undertaken with another gear;
- The fisheries are subject to a management plan and carry out a monitoring of catches as requested in Article 23;
- The vessels concerned have a track record of more than 5 years;
- The fisheries do not interfere with the activities of vessels using gears other than trawls, seines or similar towed nets;
- The fisheries are regulated in order to ensure that catches of species mentioned in Annex IX of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 with the exception of mollusc bivalves, are minimal;
- The fisheries do not target cephalopods.

## **2.2 Derogation to the minimum mesh size (Article 9, paragraph 7)**

- The fisheries are highly selective and have a negligible effect on the marine environment; and
- The fisheries do not operate above seagrass beds of, in particular, *Posidonia oceanica* or other marine phanerogams.

## **6.9. ASSESSMENT OF A NATIONAL MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR BOTTOM TRAWLERS IN CERTAIN TERRITORIAL WATERS OF SPAIN (MURCIA)**

**DG Mare focal person:** Anne Cécile Dragon (D1)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

**Possible presenter:** tbd

### **Background provided by the Commission**

In October 2020, the Spanish Administration expressed its intention to adopt a new Management Plan for trawling in certain territorial waters of Spain (Murcia). This plan envisions the renewal of a previous derogation request from Spain to EC 1967/2006 Article 13(11) in terms of distance from the coast in waters of Spain (Murcia).

### **Request to the STECF**

Building on the July 2021 (STECF PLEN 21-02) and March 2023 (STECF PLEN 23-01) STECF evaluations, STECF is requested to review and make any appropriate comments and recommendations on the new documents submitted by Spain related to the new

management plan for the trawl fisheries with regards to Article 13(11) of the Mediterranean Regulation.

In particular, STECF is requested to:

**TOR 1.** Advise and assess whether the management plan for trawlers in the waters of Murcia contains adequate elements in terms of:

**1.1. The description of the fisheries**

- Biological characteristics and state of the exploited resources with reference in particular to long-term yields.
- Description of the fishing pressure and measures to accomplish a sustainable exploitation of the main target stocks.
- Data on catches (landings and discards) of the species concerned, fishing effort and abundance indices such as catch-per-unit-effort (or CPUE).
- if possible, catch composition in terms of size distribution.
- Information on the social and economic impact of the measures proposed.
- Potential impact of the fishing gear on the marine environment with particular interest on protected habitats (i.e. seagrass bed, coralligenous habitat and maërl bed);

**1.2. Objectives, safeguards and conservation/technical measures**

- Objectives that are consistent with the objectives set out in Article 2 and with the relevant provisions of Articles 6 of CFP Regulation and quantifiable targets, such as fishing mortality rates and total biomass.
- Objectives for conservation and technical measures to be taken in order to achieve the targets set out in Article 15 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, and measures designed to avoid and reduce, as far as possible, unwanted catches.
- Measures proportionate to the objectives, the targets and the expected time frame.
- Safeguards to ensure that quantifiable targets are met, as well as remedial actions, where needed, including situations where the deteriorating quality of data or non-availability places the sustainability of the main stocks of the fishery at risk.
- Other conservation measures, in particular measures to gradually eliminate discards, taking into account the best available scientific advice or to minimise the negative impact of fishing on the ecosystem.

**1.3. Other aspects:**

- Quantifiable indicators for periodic monitoring and assessment of progress in achieving the objectives of the plan.

**TOR 2.** Evaluate whether the following conditions set by the MEDREG and Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 are fulfilled:

**2.1 Derogation to the distance from the coast (Article 13 – Paragraphs 5, 9, 10 and 11)**

There are particular constraints:

- sea-depth shall not be less than the 50 metres isobath,
- particular geographical constraints such as the limited size of the continental shelf along the entire coastline of the Member State or the limited extension of trawlable fishing grounds,

- no significant impact on the marine environment,
- compliance with subparagraph 3(a) and (b) of paragraph 9 of article 13,
- it shall not entail any increase in fishing effort with respect to what is already authorised by Member States.

## **6.10. JOINT RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR SARDINE FRY FISHERY IN ITALY (LIGURIA)**

**DG Mare focal person:** Chato Osio (D1)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

**Possible presenter:**

### **Background provided by the Commission**

On 23 March 2023, the Italian Administration has expressed its intention to re-launch a traditional fishery carried out in the Italian waters of the Ligurian Sea (GSA 9) for boat seines targeting sardine fry. As this is a new request of derogation from Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006 article 9/13 in terms of distance and minimum depth from the coast in the Ligurian Sea (GSA 09) as well as derogations from Reg. 2019/1241 Annex IX part. B "Mesh sizes" and the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) for *Sardina pilchardus*, Italy, in the context of regionalization has subsequently submitted a Joint Recommendation on 14 June 2023 on the subject. A management plan supports the request for derogation.

Following Article 18 of Regulation (EU) n. 1380/2013, the Italian Member State is proposing a Joint Recommendation (JR) for a new Management plan on Sardine fry fisheries (*Sardina pilchardus*) in GSA 9 that applies only to Italian territorial waters and to the Italian fleet.

Italy, as the single Member State with a direct management interest in this fishery, developed the proposed Management plan that involves only the Liguria region. This type of fishing activities has a great historical and cultural value for the area. It represents a traditional fishing technique from which derives typical Ligurian products.

The procedure that led to the development of the proposed Management plan is described as follows. The Central Administration following the request from the Liguria Region received in 2020, applied the provisions set out in Article 25 of the Reg. (EU) n.1241/2019 "Scientific research" which provides, in par. (e) that the activities having this purpose have to be conducted by a maximum of 6 vessels and that the product of this fishery cannot be marketed.

Italy has communicated this intention to the European Commission and, following the designation by the regional administration, and the list of authorized vessels thereof in compliance with the provisions of the afore mentioned article of the TMR Regulation.

The Liguria Region, with the support of the partner scientific body, started this "Scientific research" activity in 2020, and the trial will end in 2023. The data deriving from this research activity made it possible to develop the management plan referred to in Annex A of the JR.

Italy involved in this process also the MEDAC which endorsed the management plan (ANNEX B - MEDAC Ref.:98/2023 advice on sardine fry fisheries GSA9). After the entry into force of the new Technical Measures Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/12419) Member States have the possibility to develop joint recommendations that can be used to amend certain regional baseline selectivity standards through the Commission empowerment to adopt delegated Acts on the basis of these joint recommendations. This permits the tailoring of detailed and technical rules so as to take into account regional specificities.

## **Request to the STECF**

In particular, STECF is requested to:

**TOR 1.** Advice and assess whether the new management plan (Annex A) for boat seines targeting sardine fry in the waters of GSA 9 (Ligurian Sea, Italy) complies with the conditions set out in Art 19 of MedReg, is aligned to the CFP and contain adequate elements in terms of:

### **1.1. The description of the fisheries**

- Biological characteristics and state of the exploited resources with reference in particular to long-term yields.
- Description of the fishing pressure and measures to accomplish a sustainable exploitation of the main target stocks.
- Data on catches (landings and discards) of the species concerned, fishing effort and abundance indices such as catch-per-unit-effort (or CPUE).
- Catch composition in terms of size distribution, with particular reference to the percentage of catches of species subject to minimum sizes in accordance with Annex IX of Regulation (EU) 2019/12415.
- Information on the social and economic impact of the measures proposed.
- Potential impact of the fishing gear on the marine environment with particular interest on protected habitats (i.e. seagrass bed, coralligenous habitat and maërl bed);

### **1.2. Objectives, safeguards and conservation/technical measures**

- Objectives that are consistent with the objectives set out in Article 2 and with the relevant provisions of Articles 6 of CFP<sup>6</sup> Regulation and quantifiable targets, such as fishing mortality rates and total biomass.
- Objectives for conservation and technical measures to be taken in order to achieve the targets set out in Article 15 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, and measures designed to avoid and reduce, as far as possible, unwanted catches.
- Measures proportionate to the objectives, the targets and the expected time frame.

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<sup>5</sup> Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1380/2013, (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973, (EU) 2019/472 and (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005

<sup>6</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC.

- Safeguards to ensure that quantifiable targets are met, as well as remedial actions, where needed, including situations where the deteriorating quality of data or non-availability places the sustainability of the main stocks of the fishery at risk.
- Other conservation measures, in particular measures to gradually eliminate discards, taking into account the best available scientific advice or to minimise the negative impact of fishing on the ecosystem.

### **1.3. Other aspects**

- Quantifiable indicators for periodic monitoring and assessment of progress in achieving the objectives of the plan.

**TOR 2.** Evaluate whether the following conditions set by the MEDREG and by TMR (Regulation (EU) 2019/1241) are fulfilled:

#### **2.1 Derogation to the distance from the coast (Article 13– Paragraphs 5 and 9)**

- There are particular geographical constraints, such as the limited size of the continental shelf along the entire coastline;
- The fisheries have any significant impact on the marine environment;
- The fisheries involve a limited number of vessels and do not contain any increase in the fishing effort;
- The fisheries cannot be undertaken with another gear;
- The fisheries are subject to a management plan and carry out a monitoring of catches as requested in Article 23;
- The vessels concerned have a track record of more than 5 years;
- The fisheries do not interfere with the activities of vessels using gears other than trawls, seines or similar towed nets;
- The fisheries are regulated in order to ensure that catches of species mentioned in Annex IX of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 with the exception of mollusk bivalves, are minimal
- The fisheries do not target cephalopods.
- The fisheries do not operate above seagrass beds of, in particular, *Posidonia oceanica* or other marine phanerogams.

#### **2.2 Derogation to Annex IX part. B “Mesh sizes” of Reg. 2019/1241:**

The technical measures adopted in the Joint Recommendation, expressed by Italy in line with TMR Art 15(2), meet the conditions outlined in Art 15(4-5) of that regulation.

- The fisheries are highly selective and have a negligible effect on the marine environment; and

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7 Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1380/2013, (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973, (EU) 2019/472 and (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005

**2.3** Derogation to the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) for *Sardina pilchardus* as reported in Annex IX (A) of Reg. (EU) n.1241/2019 and fulfillment of the two conditions listed in footnote 4 of Annex IX part A of TMR:

- the existence of a national management plan *sensu* Art 19 of MedReg (covered by TOR 1) and
- ensuring that the stock of sardine is within safe biological limits.

**6.11. REVIEW OF AN EXEMPTION FOR ATLANTIC HALIBUT**

**DG Mare focal person:** Paulo Vasconcelos, Mael le Drast (C5)

**Possible STECF rapporteur:** tbd

**Possible presenter:**

**Background provided by the Commission**

This Scheveningen Group proposed a joint recommendation (JR) containing measures for Atlantic halibut (*Hippoglossus hippoglossus*) during the spawning period in the Skagerrak and Kattegat, ICES division 3a, by amending Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 that establishes a framework for technical measures for the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems.

The stock of Atlantic halibut in the Northeast Atlantic is still not assessed by ICES, as it is considered to be depleted since several decades and does not show signs of recovery. However, this species still concentrates during the spawning season in the Skagerrak, which might indicate that spawning of the putative Skagerrak-Kattegat component still exists.

Management measures for Atlantic halibut have been discussed between EU and Norway in the consultations regarding the Skagerrak and Kattegat. In the 2023 Agreed Record of those consultations, the EU considered introducing an EU-level seasonal closure for this species.

Following those consultations and the scientific evidence provided in this JR, the Scheveningen Group recommends establishing a closed fishing season for Atlantic halibut in the Skagerrak and in the Swedish EEZ of the Kattegat, to apply for both commercial and recreational fisheries from 20 December to 31 March.

**Request to the STECF**

STECF is requested to assess the present JR submitted by the Scheveningen Group.

Specifically, the STECF is requested to:

- Comment on the appropriateness of the proposed closure spatially and temporally in protecting spawning halibut.

- Comment on the potential combined effects of this EU-level seasonal closure and the existent Norway prohibition to fish halibut during the spawning season, in terms of protection of the species.

## **7. ITEMS/DISCUSSION POINTS FOR PREPARATION OF EWGS AND OTHER STECF WORK**

### **7.1 PREPARATION OF EWG 23-11: FISHING EFFORT REGIME FOR DEMERSAL FISHERIES IN THE WEST MED**

*Anne Cécile Dragon (D1)*

STECF is requested to discuss the organisation of this EWG, clarify the workflow and discuss the draft ToRs. The discussion should be conducted having in mind the preparatory discussions conducted during STECF PLEN 22-03 and STECF PLEN 23-01 on the short- and long-term steps to secure best available scientific advice for the West Med MAP implementation.

### **7.2 PREPARATION OF EWG 23-15: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TECHNICAL MEASURES REGULATION**

*Maria Moset, Kenneth Patterson (D3)*

STECF is requested to discuss the organisation of this EWG, clarify the workflow and discuss the draft ToRs.

### **7.3 PREPARATION OF EWG 23-17: SOCIAL DATA IN EU FISHERIES**

*Joan Roussouliere-Azzam, Antonios Stamoulis, Evelien Ranshuysen (D3)*

STECF is requested to discuss the organisation of this EWG, the organisation of any ad-hoc contracts, clarify the workflow and discuss the draft ToRs.

During the STECF PLEN 23-02, the STECF, JRC and DG MARE is requested to further solidify the way forward on the two possible options opted for presentation of social data. STECF notes that EWG 22-14 identified two possible options for the presentation of the social data currently collected in the frame of EUMAP table 9. The social variables could be presented in one single report dedicated to the social variables of the three sectors (fisheries, aquaculture, and processing) to be prepared once every three years, or in separate sections included in the Economic Reports for each sector (as is currently the case).

In both options, the presentation of social data could be delivered once every three years because, according to the EUMAP, social data should be collected every three years. STECF notes that for both options to present social data (as separate sections in the economic reports or in a standalone social report) additional input is required. If the approach of

publishing social data in the AER is chosen, the structure of the social chapter and appropriate content in each of the economic reports should be further detailed, clarified and/or revised. If a standalone document is to be developed the social data call structure, data presentation, the format of the report and additional sources of data need to be developed further. STECF notes that while both options have their advantages and disadvantages in the longer term, the standalone option may be more appropriate over time as more social data can be collected and more social information can be provided together with the variables from EUMAP Table 9.

#### **7.4 CFP MONITORING**

*Kenneth Patterson, Evelien Ranshuysen (D3)*

Presentation of the 2023 model-based indicators derived with the proposed new modelling framework implemented in the R-package JARA. Comparison with the results published in the CFP monitoring report STECF-adhoc-23-01, STECF-adhoc-22-01 and presented at PLEN-22-03. Presentation and discussion of model output diagnostics as mentioned in PLEN-22-03.

#### **7.5 PREPARATION OF EWG 23-12: STOCK ASSESSMENT IN THE ADRIATIC, IONIAN AND AEGEAN SEAS**

*Chato Osio (D1)*

STECF is requested to clarify the workflow of this EWG and discuss the draft ToRs. The discussion should be conducted with the aim to have final agreed ToRs for the EWG by the end of the PLEN 23-02 meeting, ready to be published on the STECF/EWG website.