



**Scientific, Technical and Economic  
Committee for Fisheries (STECF)**

**Opinion by Written Procedure**

**Evaluations of Slovenian and Spanish  
Management Plans (STECF-OWP-12-02)**

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**OPINION OF THE SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC  
COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES (STECF) BY WRITTEN PROCEDURE  
STECF COMMENTS ON EVALUATIONS OF SLOVENIAN AND SPANISH MANAGEMENT  
PLANS BY THE STECF EXPERT WORKING GROUP EWG-11-20**

**MARCH 2012**

**1. BACKGROUND**

STECF is requested to review the assessments of Slovenian and Spanish Management Plans undertaken by the Expert Working Group EWG-11-20 (16-20 January 2012, Madrid).

**2. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The terms of reference for the STECF-EWG-11-20 in relation to the assessments of Slovenian and Spanish Management Plans were as follows:

**h) Assessment of management plan 2011-2015 submitted by Spain and Slovenia**

STECF EWG 11-20 is requested to review the scientific basis for management plan(s) as required by the Mediterranean Regulation ( C.R. (EC) No1967/2006), to evaluate its findings, to make appropriate comments, also with respect to the elements/measures included in the proposed management plan and to advise whether the plan contains elements that account for:

1. the biological characteristics and the state of the exploited resources with reference in particular to low risk of stock collapse,
2. the fishing pressure and if concerned fisheries are duly described and expected to exploit the main target stocks in line with their production potentials. Advise whether the plan is expected to maintain or to revert fisheries productivity to higher levels in line with MSY or proxy and in which time frame.
3. pre-agreed harvesting control rules based either on catch limitation, fishing pressure or biomass levels
4. impact of fishing activities on marine environment (protected habitats and species)
5. size and/or species selectivity of the regulated fishing gears with particular attention to sizes and relative quantities of species mentioned in Annex III of the Mediterranean Regulation
6. mechanisms of monitoring and review of the plans

### 3. STECF OBSERVATIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Spanish MP

STECF notes that the 2006-2010 Spanish plans established a 10% reduction in fishing effort plus additional technical measures. However, these measures were not sufficient to achieve recovery of overexploited stocks or even halt their decline. The average reduction in fishing mortality to achieve  $F_{msy}$  for the demersal and pelagic species highlighted in Article 2 of the proposed plan for 2011-2015 will need to be approximately 64% and 16 %, respectively. The new 2011-2015 plan prescribes an overall reduction in fishing effort (defined as number of fishing vessels) of 20%. As the proposed reduction in vessel numbers has no spatial resolution and/or is not fishery-specific it is difficult to assess the effect of the plan in relation to small pelagics and demersal species.

Considering the plan's aim of achieving sustainable exploitation by 2016 (Article 13), STECF considers that it is highly unlikely that the required overall reductions in fishing mortality will be reached by that time with a 20% reduction in fishing units, even if accompanied by complementary technical measures. Thus, STECF concludes that the proposed Spanish management plan for 2011-2015, while being on appropriate scientific background and setting correct goals (i.e.  $F_{msy}$ ), is unlikely to achieve  $F_{msy}$  for any stocks by 2016.

#### Slovenian MP

STECF notes that the proposed Slovenian MP addresses many of the elements that should be considered in a management plan and additional information that was absent in previous versions of the Slovenian MP has been now included.

Regarding the proposed purse seine derogation (concerning the size of surrounding nets), STECF reiterates its opinion that the derogation is sufficiently justified under the condition that a pilot study is developed to monitor the vessels fishing under that derogation for one year, and that the result of the study should be submitted for further evaluation. STECF suggests that the Slovenian authorities submit a proposed monitoring programme to the Commission detailing how the monitoring will be carried out and precisely what will be monitored in order that an assessment of the impact of vessels fishing under any proposed derogation can be undertaken.

STECF considers that establishing effort limits at the National level is unlikely to be an effective management measure to control the overall exploitation rate on stocks exploited by several countries, as the Slovenian catches form only a small part of the total international catches of the exploited stocks. STECF also concludes that the management of the Slovenian fishing resources should be established at the regional level (i.e. GSA 17) in conjunction with management of the fleets from other countries exploiting the same stocks.

STECF reiterates its previous recommendation that the management of the fisheries for small pelagic stocks through effort control alone will likely not be able to regulate the exploitation rate and that consideration should be given to introducing landing restrictions (i.e. TAC at the stock level) as a more effective management tool for small pelagics in the Mediterranean.

# **REPORT TO THE STECF**

## **EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON Assessment of Mediterranean Sea stocks - including evaluation of National Management Plans (EWG-11-20)**

### **Evaluations of Slovenian and Spanish Management Plans**

**Madrid, 16-20 January 2012**

This report does not necessarily reflect the view of the STECF and the European Commission and in no way anticipates the Commission's future policy in this area

## 1. TOR H ASSESSMENT OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN SUBMITTED BY SPAIN AND SLOVENIA

According to EU regulations, Member States are expected to adopt management plans for the different fisheries. The plans shall include conservation reference points in order to allow the exploitation of stocks according to the MSY framework. The management plans shall also be established on the basis of the precautionary approach to fisheries management and take account of biological reference points recommended by the relevant scientific bodies. The plans shall ensure the long term sustainable exploitation of the stocks and that the impact of fishing activities on the marine ecosystems is kept within sustainable levels.

The Management plans may incorporate any measure to limit fishing mortality and the environmental impact of fishing activities: catch limits, fixing the number and type of fishing vessels authorized to fish, limiting fishing effort (e.g. number of fishing days), adopting technical measures (e.g. structure of the fishing gears, fishing practices, areas/period of fishing restriction, minimum size, reduction of the impact of the fishing activities on non-target species and marine ecosystems), establishing incentives to promote selective fishing and conduct pilot projects on alternative types of fishing management techniques.

STECF EWG 11-20 is requested to review the scientific basis for management plan(s) as required by the Mediterranean Regulation (C.R. (EC) No1967/2006), to evaluate its findings, to make appropriate comments, also with respect to the elements/measures included in the proposed management plan, and to advise whether the plan contains elements that account for:

1. the biological characteristics and the state of the exploited resources with reference in particular to low risk of stock collapse
2. the fishing pressure and if concerned fisheries are duly described and expected to exploit the main target stocks in line with their production potentials. Advise whether the plan is expected to maintain or to revert fisheries productivity to higher levels in line with MSY or proxy and in which time frame
3. pre-agreed harvesting control rules based either on catch limitation, fishing pressure or biomass levels
4. impact of fishing activities on marine environment (protected habitats and species)
5. size and/or species selectivity of the regulated fishing gears with particular attention to sizes and relative quantities of species mentioned in Annex III of the Mediterranean Regulation mechanisms of monitoring and review of the plans.

### 1.1. Spanish management plan 2011-2015

The proposed Spanish fisheries management plan (MP) comprises a series of tools established in Spanish National legislation and which regulate the various existing fishing methods: protected areas, restriction of the fishing effort, minimum legal size of the fish, technical characteristics of the gears and equipments, etc. In addition, these operations are complemented by direct obligations arising from Community legislation concerning technical measures. The Proposed management plan can be viewed at (EWG 11-20, Doc 1-3<sup>1</sup>)

All the proposed measures for fisheries management have been based on the results included in scientific reports of the Spanish Oceanographic Institute (IEO), the socioeconomic characteristics of the fisheries sector in Spain and the obligations arising at any time from compliance with the Community legislation.

Management plans (MPs) include conservation reference points for some species and incorporate objectives aimed at the maintenance of the stocks size, fishing mortality or catches within certain limits. The, MPs also prescribe the number and type of fishing vessels authorized to fish, the adoption of certain technical measures regarding the characteristics of fishing gears, areas or periods in which fishing activities are prohibited or restricted, including protection of spawning and breeding grounds (although only for small

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pelagics), minimum size of the fish that might be landed and implementation of specific measures to reduce the undesired effects of fishing activity on marine ecosystems.

The main objective of the MPs is to modulate fishing effort and exploitation patterns in order to achieve a exploitation rates, which aim to ensure good yields and long term sustainable stocks and fisheries. Accordingly, in the case of small pelagic species the goal is to achieve and maintain the exploitation rate (defined as the reference point  $E=F/Z$ ) at a rate of 0.4. For demersal species the objective is to reduce fishing mortality at the rate corresponding to  $F_{msy}$  defined for each stock in each geographic sub-area (GSA). According to the Spanish MPs, the achievement of these objectives will guarantee the long term stability of catches and landings of pelagic and demersal species and the recovery or maintenance (depending on its current status) of the stocks in terms of recruitment and spawning stock biomass.

It is established that the General Secretariat for the Sea will study the progress made towards these objectives in accordance with the scientific and socioeconomic reports obtained for this purpose before 31 December 2012 and every two years thereafter and the results will be sent to the Commission services.

In the plan, fisheries are fairly well described, and specify their target species, the gears in use, the spatial and temporal changes of the activity, current legislation related to each fishery and socio-economic considerations. Results of the assessments of the current exploitation status for several stocks are presented together with the MSY reference points based on mortality rates. There is a general situation of overfishing (recent  $F$  is higher than the proposed  $F$ -reference points) in both Spanish GSAs 5 and 6 and uncertain stock status in GSA 1. For most of the stocks, a significant reduction in fishing pressure from the present level is required in order to rebuild stock biomass levels and population size/age structure to levels that can deliver MSY. The average reduction in  $F$  to achieve  $F_{msy}$  for the species highlighted in the MP will need to be around 64%. Current status in relation to Fishing Mortality reference points are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Current fishing mortality ( $F_{curr}$ ) in relation to  $F_{msy}$  reference points, exploitation status and the reduction in  $F$  required to achieve  $F_{msy}$  for the stocks referred to in the proposed Spanish management plan.

Species	Geographical sub-area	$F_{curr}$	$F_{msy}$	State of exploitation	% decrease in F
<i>M. barbatus</i>	Balearic Islands	0.82	0.33	Overexploited	60
<i>M. surmuletus</i>	Balearic Islands	0.60	0.38	Overexploited	37
<i>M. merluccius</i>	Balearic Islands	0.85	0.20	Overexploited	76
<i>A. antennatus</i>	Balearic Islands	0.62	0.33	Overexploited	47
<i>N. norvegicus</i>	Balearic Islands	0.45	0.30	Overexploited	33
<i>P. longirostris</i>	Balearic Islands	0.82	0.31	Overexploited	62
<i>M. merluccius</i>	Northern Spain	1.70	0.15	Overexploited	91
<i>M. barbatus</i>	Northern Spain	0.67	0.17	Overexploited	75
<i>A. antennatus</i>	Northern Spain	1.09	0.24	Overexploited	78
<i>P. longirostris</i>	Northern Spain	1.37	0.30	Overexploited	78
				Average decline from $F_{curr}$	64
		$E_{curr}$	$E_{msy}$		% decrease in E
Anchovy	GSA01	0.6	0.4	Overexploited	33
Sardine	GSA01	0.31	0.4	Sustainably exploited	-29
Anchovy	GSA06	≈0.5	0.4	Overexploited	11
Sardine	GSA06	0.8	0.4	Overexploited	50

The plan proposes a reduction in fishing effort (defined as number of fishing vessels) of 20% for a period that ends in 2016. Considering the plan's goal of achieving sustainable exploitation by 2016, it is highly unlikely that the  $F_{0.1}$  targets will be reached for all stocks with a 20% reduction in fishing units, even if accompanied by complementary technical measures (which imply a better selection pattern, protection of individuals during critical phases of life, enforcements of control of minimum sizes, etc.). The proposed 20% reduction, being based solely on withdrawing vessel units constitutes only a nominal reduction in fishing capacity as withdrawal mainly affects vessels that are the least efficient, and therefore a 20% decline in vessel numbers is unlikely to correspond to a 20% reduction in deployed fishing effort or fishing

mortality. Additionally, the proposed reduction in vessel numbers has no spatial resolution and/or is not fishery-specific with the result that fishing units may be reduced only in certain areas or in areas with low fishing mortality, where such measures would be less effective.

The management plan establishes the implementation of several technical measures like gear size, temporal/spatial area closures, minimum landing sizes, etc. These measures, if implemented appropriately, can have positive effects on the stocks. However expected effects of the proposed measures have not been quantified. It is therefore impossible to assess what could realistically be the impact on the stocks in terms of achieving MSY exploitation levels. Furthermore, even if a 20% reduction in vessel numbers results in a 20% reduction in fishing mortality, it seems unlikely that the proposed technical measures will give rise to the additional 40% reduction in fishing mortality required to achieve exploitation rates corresponding to  $F_{MSY}$  or  $E=0.4$ . STECF also notes that the plan proposal does not contain and detail as to how or when the proposed measures will be implemented and hence it is not possible to assess the likely effects of such measures.

A further issue concerns an absence of information on that part of the Spanish fleet that fishes outside of Spanish territorial waters i.e. purse seiners targeting small pelagic, long-liners and trawlers targeting hake operating in the Gulf of Lions (GSA7). While this part of the fleet contributes to the overall fleet capacity and fishing effort, there is no information in the proposed plan detailing whether this part of the fleet will also be subject to reductions in vessel numbers under the plan..

The plan proposes to implement a daily limit on catches and landings. However, it is unclear how such limits will be set or whether they will deliver fishing mortality rates that correspond with those required to achieve MSY since such limits are usually designed to ensure a stable market supply rather than to explicitly control fishing mortality.

The proposed management plan specifically refers to 14 stocks. However the number of individual species is limited to 8 commercial species while the species subject to commercial exploitation are several more. Of particular concern is the lack of any specific management measures aimed at controlling exploitation on highly vulnerable species such as elasmobranchs and rays.

### *Conclusions*

EWG11-20 (MED III) notes that the implementation of the 2006-2010 MP did not achieve MSY for several species. For example, the status of the following stocks has either worsened or failed to improve: anchovy in GSA1 and GSA6, sardine, hake and pink shrimp in GSA6. The 2006-2010 plans established a 10% reduction in fishing effort plus additional technical measures such as some area closures, gear changes and others. However, these measures were not sufficient to achieve recovery of overexploited stocks or even halt their decline. The EWG11-20 (MED III) concludes that the proposed plan for 2011-2016, while giving detailed scientific background and setting appropriate goals (i.e.  $F_{msy}$ ), is unlikely to achieve  $F_{msy}$  for any stocks by 2016.

## **1.2. Slovenian management plan**

### ***Background***

According to Council Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006 (art.19), Member States are expected to adopt management plans for fisheries conducted by trawl nets (demersal and pelagic), boats seines, shore seines, surrounding nets and dredges (for molluscs) within their territorial waters.

The plans shall include conservation reference points which allow the exploitation of stocks according to the MSY framework. The management plans shall also be established on the basis of the precautionary approach to fisheries management and take account of biological reference points recommended by the relevant scientific bodies.

The plans shall ensure the long term sustainable exploitation of the stocks and that the impact of fishing activities on the marine ecosystems is kept within sustainable levels.

The MP that has been examined during the EWG11-20 (MED III) is the fourth version submitted by the Slovenian authorities. A first version was submitted in 2007. A second version was examined during the STECF July Plenary in 2008. Additional data and information was required on: catch data for all fisheries concerned; data on trends in CPUE; discard rates; stock assessment for the target species or other useful stock indicators, including shared stocks; specification of annual targets for the reduction of the bottom trawl fleet; the specification of annual targets for the reduction of pelagic trawl effort. The MP submitted in 2008 included two requests for derogations: for the purse seine fishery (concerning the size of surrounding nets); and for the bottom trawl fishery (to continue the use of the existing mesh size). Regarding purse seine, STECF opinion was that the derogation was sufficiently justified under the condition that a pilot study was developed to monitor the vessels fishing under that derogation for one year, and that the result of the study should be submitted for further evaluation. As for the requested derogation for bottom trawl, STECF opinion was that it was not in the position to provide a proper assessment of the likely impact of the proposed derogation due to insufficient data on the different level of catches and discards with the various mesh sizes used and noted that the musky octopus (*Eledone moscata*) is the most abundant species in the bottom trawl catches in Slovenia. STECF reviewed the new version of the Slovenian MP in the November Plenary 2009 and concluded that appropriate data and information were still lacking to allow an evaluation of its impact. Moreover, the MP had no clear biological and socioeconomic objectives, no proper explanation and justification of actions to achieve the objectives and no harvest control rules in place. There was a lack of any assessment of the status of the resources that the MP addressed. Therefore, it did not fully meet the requirements of Article 6 of the Council Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002.

#### *General comments on the Slovenian Management Plan*

The newly submitted MP is well structured in terms of a comprehensive description of the fishery and management of the fishery resources in Slovenia. It provides a detailed presentation of the current fleets and landings, the spatial distribution of fishing activities and seasonality, and, for the various fishing gears, a description of the gear and operation, including CPUE trends (2005- 2010) by fleet segment and target species. SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) is presented, synthesizing the current status of the Slovenian fisheries. The Proposed management plan can be viewed at (EWG 11-20, Doc 4<sup>2</sup>)

EWG11-20 (MED III) notes that the area covered by Slovenian fishing zones as presented in the MP (Fig. 3), might include fishing grounds which are actually outside the territorial waters of Slovenia.

Total landings in 2010 were 764 t and the fishing fleet consisted of 91 active vessels, which most (about 90%) of them are small, artisanal vessels measuring less than 12 m. Sardine and anchovy are the species with the highest landings (>70% of the total landings over 2006-2010). Almost the entire catch of these two species is produced by vessels that employ a mid-water pair trawl.

EWG 11-20 notes that Figures 4 and 5 and Tables 4 and 5 report landings before and after Slovenian independence from the former Yugoslavia, thus it is not clear whether the landings data before 1991 correspond only to the vessels based in the Republic of Slovenia. Furthermore the reported landings are not attributed to specific fishing grounds.

The information on stock assessment for the main target species of the Slovenian fleet (sardine and anchovy) refer to the evaluations performed in the frame of the GFCM and the management measures proposed in the MP are those arising from the GFCM. Nevertheless, since the main targets are shared stocks (i.e. sardine and anchovy) and the fishing activity of the Slovenian fleet is very low compared to the catches of the neighbouring countries, it is important to stress that any change in the fishing effort of the Slovenian fleet would have very little overall effect on these pelagic resources. For other target species and gears, for which no assessment is available at the national level, when a CPUE decreasing trend is observed, a reduction in fishing effort is proposed.

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The current socio- economic situation for the Slovenian fleet is described and it is pointed out that the fleet is old and in need of modernisation. Detailed information on the fishing fleet by segment, is given in the plan proposal (tonnage, engine power, employees, days at sea, fuel consumption, landings, total income, gross added value, gross cash flow and capital value). The fishing fleet suffered a loss in 2009 of around 262000 €, and the total landings revenues amounted to about 2.2 million €. According to the MP, the main socio-economic goal should be an increased investment through the renewal of the fishing fleet. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether renewal of the fleet will make the fishing activity profitable due for example to the small market and limited fishery resources.

Measures to adjust the fishing effort of vessels using purse seines (PS), mid-water pair trawls (PTM), set gillnets (GNS), trammel nets (GTR) and bottom otter trawls (OTB) are proposed. In addition, other management measures are envisaged, particularly technical measures.

The MP stresses that the management of the pelagic species (sardine and anchovy) for which regional assessments are available (GFCM assessments) should take into account GFCM recommendations. Nevertheless, since Slovenian catches are a very small proportion of the total catches, it is not possible to predict in the MP the likely effects of a reduction of the Slovenian fleet on these stocks. The same applies for the demersal stocks, for which no regional assessment is available on the status of these stocks: these should be also assessed and managed at the regional level (GSA17). For these reasons, EWG11-20 (MED III) consider that it is at the regional level that joint biological and reference points targets, and thus MPs should be established.

The MPs resubmits the request for the derogation regarding the size of the surrounding nets contained in previous MPs. The request is for Slovenian fishermen to be permitted to use surrounding nets whose overall drop is greater than that laid down in the second subparagraph of Article 13(3) of Council regulation (EC) No 1967/2006. Slovenian fishermen would therefore be able to use surrounding nets with an overall drop of 70 metres. The request is based on special circumstances regarding: selectivity of the fishing gear (targets are anchovy and sardine, with highly selective catches and negligible discards); small size and shallowness of the fishing area (i.e. the use of smaller net would lead to a considerable reduction of the catches); lack of protected zones in the area in which the fisheries operate; fishing method (due to the shallowness of the fishing ground, the shoal tends to rapidly disperse); limited fishing period (May to September); and purse seine structure (ratio height and length). The MP states that the use of purse seines according to the EU regulation prescribed overall drop would make the fisheries uneconomic and, consequently, will lead to the abandonment of this method of fishing. This derogation would apply to seven active vessels with purse seines. EWG11-20 (MED III) notes that the intention behind this derogation is to continue to use current fishing gears (purse seines), since changes in the dimension of the purse seine nets according to Article 13(3) of Council regulation (EC) No 1967/2006 would imply considerable investments in the sector, which according to the MP is already not profitable. Nevertheless, the MP states that “the use of smaller net would lead to a considerable reduction of the catches”. However, there is no estimation or simulation in the MP of the impact of the net dimension on the catches.

The MP states that the existence of two marine reserves (Portorož and Strunjan), in which all fishing activities are prohibited, had adverse economic effects on small-scale coastal fishermen. However, these effects are not supported by appropriate data and furthermore the plan disregards the potential positive effects of marine reserves (e.g. spill over effects).

### *Conclusions*

The submitted MPs addresses many of the elements that should be considered in a management plan and additional information that was lacking in previous revisions of the Slovenian MP has been now included.

Regarding the proposed purse seine derogation (concerning the size of surrounding nets), EWG11-20 (MED III) reiterates STECF opinion that the derogation is sufficiently justified under the condition that a pilot study was developed to monitor the vessels fishing under that derogation for one year, and that the result of the study should be submitted for further evaluation.

The EWG11-20 (MED III) consider that the management of fishery resources exploited by the Slovenian fleet should be undertaken at the regional level rather than at the National level, as proposed in the MP. The EWG11-20 (MED III) notes that at present, MSY reference points are available only for sardine and anchovy

(i.e. no reference points and no management measures proposed for demersal species for the whole GSA17, eastern Adriatic included). The GFCM-SAC recommended that for anchovy and sardine stocks in GSA17 fishing effort should not be allowed to increase. The EWG11-20 (MED III) considers that in keeping with the recommendations of the STECF, the management of the fisheries of small pelagic stocks through effort control alone is unlikely to regulate the exploitation rate and that consideration should be given for introducing landing restrictions at the stock level, as a more effective management tool for small pelagics in the Mediterranean.

The proposed management measure to reduce national fishing effort, based on the CPUE trend in the last years, have the objective to achieve the sustainable exploitation of the resources concerned. Nevertheless, EWG11-20 (MED III) considers that establishing effort limits at the national level is unlikely to be an effective management measure to control the overall exploitation rate, as the Slovenian catches form only a small part of the total international catches of the exploited stocks. As mentioned above, the management of the Slovenian fishing resources should be established at the regional level (i.e. GSA 17) in conjunction with management of the fleets from other countries exploiting the same stocks.

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**Abstract**

The STECF Expert Working Group EWG-11-20, which was held 16-20 January 2012 in Madrid (Spain), conducted evaluations of Slovenian and Spanish Management Plans. STECF then reviewed the EWG-11-20 evaluations by written procedure in March 2012.

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