

Recommendation GFCM/45/2022/1 on a multiannual management plan for European eel in the Mediterranean Sea, amending Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/1

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

CONSIDERING that the objectives of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of marine living resources in the GFCM area of application;

RECALLING that, in giving effect to the objective of the GFCM Agreement, the GFCM shall adopt recommendations on conservation and management measures aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of fishing activities, in order to preserve marine living resources and the economic and social viability of fisheries and that, in adopting such recommendations, the GFCM shall give particular attention to measures to prevent overfishing and minimize discards, as well as to the potential impacts on small-scale fisheries and local communities;

CONSIDERING that all measures formulated by the GFCM shall be based on the best scientific advice available, taking into account relevant environmental, economic and social factors;

CONSIDERING that the GFCM shall apply the precautionary approach in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

DEEPLY CONCERNED that the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) concluded, at its twenty-third session (Italy, June 2022), that the stock of European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) remains in a critical state and has reached its lowest recruitment levels ever recorded, despite the transitional measures set out in Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/1 on a multiannual management plan for European eel in the Mediterranean Sea;

TAKING NOTE that the SAC recommended strengthening existing transitional measures in 2022 while continuing work towards informing future long-term management measures for 2023;

ACKNOWLEDGING the conclusion of the GFCM Research Programme on European eel that recreational fishing of European eel often overlaps with illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing;

ADOPTS, in conformity with Articles 5 b), 8 b) and 13 of the GFCM Agreement, the following recommendation:

Amendment of Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/1

1. Paragraph 3 of Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/1 shall be modified as follows:

“With due regard to the critical state of the European eel stock as reported by the SAC and to the consequent urgency in restoring the conservation state of this stock, CPCs agree that all activities capturing European eel shall be covered by this plan, namely targeted and incidental catch.”

2. Paragraph 19 of Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/1 shall be modified as follows:

“Having regard to the closure period, CPCs shall decide on one of the following options to be applied and shall report their decision to the GFCM Secretariat:

Option 1

Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties shall establish an annual fishing closure of six consecutive months, during which landings of European eel at all stages (glass eel, yellow eel and silver eel) shall be prohibited. In order to reduce fishing mortality effectively, the closure period shall be defined by the CPCs in their respective national management plans, together with the measures defined in paragraph 18, taking into account the temporal migration patterns of European eel in the CPC concerned.

Option 2

Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties shall establish an annual fishing closure consisting of three consecutive months, from 1 January to 31 March, as well as three additional months to be chosen between 1 April and 30 November, during which landings of European eel at all stages (glass eel, yellow eel and silver eel) shall be prohibited. In order to reduce fishing mortality effectively, the closure period shall be defined by the CPCs in their respective national management plans, together with the measures defined in paragraph 18, taking into account the temporal migration patterns of European eel in the CPC concerned.”

3. Paragraph 19 bis shall be added to Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/1 as follows:

“The Compliance Committee (CoC) shall, during its sixteenth session, assess the implementation of the measure referred to in paragraph 19. In the event that it is established that a CPC has failed to comply with its obligations referred to in paragraph 19, the CoC shall immediately require the CPC concerned to take the necessary measures in order to achieve the objectives of the present recommendation.”

4. Paragraph 20 bis shall be added to Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/1 as follows:

“Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties shall ensure that recreational fishing of European eel at all stages (glass eel, yellow eel and silver eel) is prohibited in all habitats.”

5. Paragraph 27 of Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/1 shall be modified as follows:

“Where IUU fishing is known to occur, available data, including estimates, shall also be transmitted to the GFCM Secretariat no later than the forty-third session of the GFCM.”

6. Paragraph 47 of Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/1 shall be deleted.