

MEDAC Draft advice on the definition of Small Scale Coastal Fisheries (SSCF)

The MEDAC FG on SSF, during the meeting held on February 25 in Naples, organised an interAC discussion on the definition of SSF together with CCSud, (and with the possible collaboration of others Acs, such as CCRUP and NWWAC).

The SSF definition in national management/legislation is typically defined by single/limited number of quantitative metrics. There is no individual metric with a cut-off point capable of distinguishing between small-scale and larger-scale:

EUROPEAN COMMISSION: *“fishing carried out by vessels with an overall length less than 12 meters that do not use towed gear”*

FAO: *“fisheries involving fishing households (as opposed to commercial companies), using relatively small amount of capital and energy, relatively small fishing vessels (if any), making short fishing trips, close to the shore, mainly for local consumption”*

ICCAT: *“with at least 3 out of 5 of the following: a) LOA less than 12m, b) fishing exclusively inside the territorial waters; c) fishing trips less than 24 hours; d) maximum crew number of four persons; or e) selective fishing techniques with a reduced environmental impact.”*

In the Mediterranean – and at global level – , the lack of a single or widely accepted definition of SSF makes it difficult to compare the sector between countries and to inform homogeneous policy interventions.

For this reason the **GFCM** realized a matrix for the characterisation of fishing activities in the Mediterranean. The goal of establishing a common definition of SSF among all parties including non-EU countries arises from the need to share policy and management measures throughout the GFCM area.

The MEDAC and the CCSUD deem appropriate to use the GFCM matrix as a basis for defining SSF, considering that it has been tested the matrix for characterizing SSF, using preliminary data collected through the GFCM socio-economic survey. The indicators of the matrix that can be used defining the SSF are:

- Size of fishing vessel
- Fishing gear
- Gross tonnage
- Motorization
- Mechanization
- Labour crew
- Ownership
- Daily trip/Multiday
- Fishing ground/zones/Distance form the shore
- Refrigeration/Storage on board

The ACs agree that it is important to proceed with the matrix, in order to start thinking things through and identifying a common, agreed-upon gradient, in order to arrive at a definition of SSF that takes into account the reality of regional fishing practices and moves beyond simple vessel length. The definition of SSF should be adapted to economic and social realities.

The matrix also takes other aspects into account, which is a good thing, because it illustrates the spectrum along which fishing activities range from small-scale to large-scale; after all, small-scale fishing is not always selective or low-impact, and it is this type of fishing that operates in even the most fragile environments.

MEDAC argues that all types of fishing have an impact, and that even small-scale fishing has an impact; all fishing activities should be assessed with a view to reducing their impact, and the GFCM matrix could serve as an initial approach to evaluating the varying degrees of impact, taking into account where the fishing takes place, the fishing effort and other relevant factors.

CONCLUSIONS (slides di Pattumelli):

The wide heterogeneity of small-scale fisheries around the Mediterranean and Black Sea challenges the inter-comparability between countries. The matrix offers a more flexible and adaptable methodology. It provides a standardized approach and a common set of criteria that can be applied objectively to identify the differentiation between small-scale and large-scale fishing units.

The matrix represents a valuable instrument to help managers identify where vessels/a fishery tends towards the small-scale of the spectrum (low aggregate score), and therefore could benefit from the involvement in a participatory approach to management.

Even with a limited number of predictors (in the three case studies mostly physical indicators: LOA, Gear, Gross Tonnage and Engine Power), the results show that a multidimensional matrix is a good tool to characterize fisheries, without limiting the characterization to length/gear or restricted and fixed definition.

However, adding a more dynamic set of characteristics - especially social and fishing effort characteristics (duration of fishing trip, engaged crew, presence of owner on board, distance from shore, disposal of catch) - can provide useful indications of the scale of a vessel or fishery.