

# The GFCM at a glance

## REBUILDING MEDITERRANEAN FISH STOCKS

May 2014

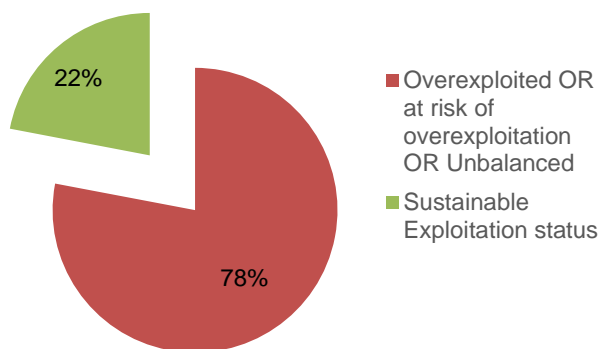
### A HISTORIC STEP

In 1952, a GFCM agreement to manage shared fish stocks in the Mediterranean Sea entered into force. More than six decades later, fish stocks under GFCM purview remain unmanaged and overexploited.

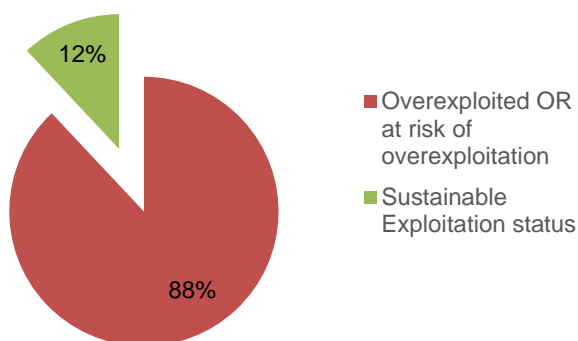
This situation will come to an end once and for all this year. A new GFCM agreement will come out of the 38th meeting of the Contracting Parties, which will be held on the 19-24 of May, in Rome, Italy. This is a historic step towards the sustainable management of Mare Nostrum, and shows a clear recognition of the need for more effort from Mediterranean countries to guarantee a better future for their fisheries sectors.

### STOCKS ASSESSED BY FAO-GFCM

Mediterranean Sea - Small pelagic stocks



Mediterranean Sea - Demersal stocks



# 78%

*of stocks under GFCM purview are overfished*

### STATUS OF FISH STOCKS

Scientists from FAO-GFCM have assessed 34 stocks in the Mediterranean Sea (9 small pelagic and 25 demersal, Black Sea excluded). In the case of small pelagic stocks (sardines, anchovies), 7 out of 9 stocks are overexploited or at risk of overexploitation. Twenty-two demersal stocks, such as hake or shrimp, are overfished.

## CHANGES TO FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Oceana, which has long advocated against overfishing in the Mediterranean Sea, welcomes the new GFCM Agreement. The text will deliver the needed framework to rebuild fish stocks to sustainable levels and preserve Mediterranean ecosystems through increased protection. In particular the:

- Adoption of multiannual plans to achieve the sustainable management of stocks (target: to achieve and maintain stocks above MSY).  
**How will the situation?: More fish at sea, fisheries more profitable.**
- Definition of Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRAs) for Essential Fish Habitats and Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems, within or outside Management plans;  
**How will the situation improve?: spawning fish, juvenile fish and endangered habitats will be protected.**
- Adoption of the precautionary principle when managing stocks.  
**How will the situation?: when the risk to the marine environment becomes imminent, precaution will apply even in the absence of information.**



Fish and crustaceans unloaded from a trawler. Port of Fiumicino, Italy.  
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## HOW THIS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED?

This historic approach will initially be implemented through regional case studies, with sound scientific data available.

Four management priorities Oceana suggests starting with:

- Outline reliable multi-annual and multi-species plans based on scientific data where it is available;
- Halt overexploitation by setting catch-limits above MSY;
- Protect Essential Fish Habitats through time/area closures; and
- Minimise the impact of the most destructive fishing gears through the protection of ecologically valuable marine habitats.

Where to start:

- 1) Areas where sound knowledge and data are available and adequate to undertake ambitious plans;
- 2) Areas subjected to high fishing pressure, and/or where important commercial stocks are
- 3) Areas with known spawning and nursery grounds.

*Examples on where to start with: the Strait of Sicily, and mixed fishery on hake and rose shrimp with bottom trawling*

### OCEANA EUROPE

European Headquarters  
Legánitos, 47  
28013 Madrid, Spain  
Phone: + 34 911 440 880  
Fax: + 34 911 440 890  
Email: europe@oceana.org

European Union Office  
Rue Montoyer, 39  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Phone: +32 (0)2 513 22 42  
Fax: +32 (0)2 513 22 46  
Email: brussels@oceana.org

Baltic Sea Office  
Nyhavn 16, 4 sal  
1051 Copenhagen, Denmark  
Phone: + 45 33151160  
Email: baltic@oceana.org