

Fishing in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Agreement area: technical measures

2014/0213(COD) - 08/12/2014 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Fisheries adopted the report by Gabriel MATO (EPP, ES) on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 1343/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on certain provisions for fishing in the GFCM (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean) Agreement area.

[Regulation \(EU\) No 1343/2011](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council lays down certain provisions for fishing in the GFCM Agreement area. It is proposed to amend this Regulation to include the measures contained in the GFCM recommendations. The proposal contains technical measures for the sustainable exploitation of red coral, the mitigation of incidental captures of seabirds, sea turtles and cetaceans and the conservation of monk seals, sharks and rays in the GFCM Agreement area.

Such measures go beyond the protection already ensured to these species at EU level by the Habitats Directive and other Union acts and include specific recording and reporting obligations for both operators and Member States.

The committee recommended that the European Parliament's position adopted at first reading following the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the Commission proposal as follows:

- according to Members, **the Commission proposal ignores measures that are already in place at national level in line with the GFCM recommendations**. Member States having already transposed these recommendations, which were adopted in 2011, 2012 and 2013, should not be constraint to submit today to the Commission requests for derogations foreseen by the GFCM, taking also into consideration the fact that the EC has failed to transpose them up to date;
- the **harvesting of red coral** shall be prohibited at depth less than 50 m until scientific studies, as validated by the GFCM's Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), indicate otherwise;
- the use of **Remotely Operated underwater Vehicles (ROVs)** for the exploitation of red coral shall be prohibited. Unless scientific advice states otherwise, that prohibition shall cover, **as from 1 January 2016**,
- the use of **Remotely Operated under-water Vehicles** which may have been authorised by Member States in zones under national jurisdiction exclusively for observation and prospection of red coral on the basis of recommendation GFCM/35/2011/2;
- the use of **ROVs** may be authorised in zones under national jurisdiction only and within a framework allowing for scientific experimental campaigns both for observation and harvesting during a limited period **not extending beyond 2015**, carried out under the supervision of national research institutions and/or in collaboration with national or international bodies;
- the retention on board **seabirds** should be authorised in only in very justified cases;
- specimens of **sea turtles** incidentally taken in fishing gears shall be safely handled and released unharmed and alive, to the extent that this is possible. The possibility to land sea turtles under national conservation plans or in case it is needed in order to rescue a harmed animal;
- to the extent practicable, vessels using purse seines for small pelagic species or surrounding nets without purse line for pelagic species shall avoid encircling sea turtles;

- specimens of **monk seals** incidentally taken in fishing gears shall be released unharmed and alive. Should such a monk seal be already dead, the carcass shall be landed and the national authorities notified at the latest upon arrival in port;
- specimens of **cetaceans** incidentally taken in fishing gears shall be safely handled and released unharmed and alive, to the extent that this is possible;
- **sharks and rays** that are caught alive are not always unharmed. However, injured ones should also be released, so that they nevertheless have some chance of survival;
- regarding **reporting obligations**, it should not apply to vessels that are not obliged to carry a logbook;
- the deadline for the **communication of the data** from the Member States to the Commission is delayed from 15 November of each year to the 15 December.