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Report on the presentation of the GAP2 project (Steven Mackinson, project coordinator and Saša Raicevich, WP2). Exchange of opinions and proposal to organize a seminar on Regionalization

The coordinator of GAP2 Steven Mackinson (CEFAS, UK) presented an overview of the project using slides. It is funded by the European Commission's FP7 Capacities programme (Science in Society), which aims to finance research projects in the key categories of Cooperation, Ideas, People and Capacities. GAP2 seeks to demonstrate the benefits of cooperation between the various sectors: researchers, fishers and policy makers. GAP is based on the collaboration among stakeholders and the RAC represents an ideal forum in which to improve participation of the different parties and promote knowledge. The coordinator explained that where the Mediterranean is concerned three case studies would be described during the meeting relative to the North Adriatic (Italy), Maltese territorial waters and the Mediterranean Red Shrimp in the coastal waters of Catalonia, Spain.

Before the three presentations, the coordinator Steven Mackinson underlined that regionalisation is a crucial aspect of the reform to the CFP and will influence the future role of the RACs. He proposed the organization of a seminar on regionalisation in collaboration with the RAC MED; the RACs will be central to regionalisation and will also facilitate multi annual management plans. The GAP2 project is already collaborating with other RACs in order to involve the relevant administrations in the process.

Saša Raicevich (ISPRA, STS Chioggia, ITALY) presented the case study being carried out in the North Adriatic. The area is one of the most abundant in the Mediterranean in terms of the quantity of fish and there is a large fishing community with an intense and complex history. Until 1950s the fishing vessels had sails and therefore their impact on the environment was negligible, with the introduction of motor powered vessels the fishing activity was more efficient, and therefore fishing capacity increased in terms of GT and engine power. The decrease in catches is due to excessive exploitation and environmental fluctuations. For example the cold weather in the last few months caused high mortality in some target species. Rising fuel prices together with the drastic reduction in catches have seen earnings from fisheries decline to almost nothing recently, and many vessels are not fishing at all at the moment. The aim of the project is to support the exchange of knowledge between researchers and fishers. Fishers' empirical knowledge is often not considered by researchers who need standardized data for analysis, therefore fishers' knowledge should be collected and given due value.

In the framework of the project there are three levels of data collection: 1) researchers go to sea to carry out sampling and data collection; 2) fishers report catches of agreed target species in electronic log books.





The fishers provide information on the catches haul by haul, each gear is equipped with a sensor to collect environmental data; 3) the last phase is the integration of data from satellites for vessels over 15 m overall length. The final aim is the proposal of shared management systems which are based on data and joint interpretations from both researchers and fishers, in order to achieve shared resource management which takes account of the uniqueness of each local setting. The Meeting was informed at the close of the presentation that the first reliable results of the case study will be available in a year's time.

Jonathan Cassar (MARRA-FCD, MALTA) presented the Maltese case study which aims to examine some demersal stocks (such as crustaceans and hake) in GSA 15 around the Maltese 25 nautical mile fisheries management zone (FMZ), and to analyse the spatio-temporal variability in maturity and the frequency of length distribution in the species being studied in order to identify the nursery and spawning areas. Mr Cassar informed the Meeting that before the project is implemented a seminar will be organized by the Maltese Ministry (MARRA), and before the operative phase begins there will be a pilot phase to highlight any difficulties that may emerge in sample collection and in the terminology to use. The researchers involved in this study will have the task of compiling all existing data on GSA 15 including both fisheries dependent and independent data. All participants will benefit from the project – the scientific community will access the fishers' knowledge and the fishers will benefit from the formulation of management plans and compensation for having participated.

The Spanish case study on the management strategies for deep water red shrimp in the Palamos area of the Catalan coast was presented by Joan Batista Company (CSIC, Barcelona, SPAIN). The project chose to focus on this species because the fishers were concerned by the catches of significant numbers of juveniles of the deep water red shrimp. This species is present throughout the Mediterranean but the peculiarity of the Catalan coast is the presence of large canyons within the continental shelf. Since the 1940's there have been oscillations in the catch data, the environmental causes were unknown at the time however now the biology of this species is well understood. The fishing vessels involved in the project are medium-large and operate single-species fishery. There is good collaboration between the researchers and the fishers, however support from the administrations is lacking. The singular aspect of the canyon is that when there is a large volume of cold water, for up to six months it can prove impossible to catch red shrimp. The fishers, together with the researchers, have agreed on some solutions; an example is the measure put into practice in 2008 when the fishers chose to increase mesh size so as not to capture juveniles. The final objective of the project is to establish a carefully-regulated management plan which informs fishers on the rules to be followed and the measures to be implemented. The presentation was closed by Pere Brull, representing the Cofradias of Palamos who informed the Meeting that, before climate change this current would arrive each year and was followed by a few months in which red shrimp was not caught, however fishing activities in the area started again soon after. Now the periods in which it is not possible to catch





this species are lengthening and funds have been requested to certify the importance of this species of shrimp, moreover a management plan has been prepared to reduce net width, or to fix times of day in which fishing is permitted so as to avoid catching juveniles.

The Chair, Mr Kahoul, thanked the GAP2 representatives and underlined the importance of finding a shared approach, creating a framework for researchers and fishers to work together. Unfortunately if some stocks in the Mediterranean are suffering it is due to a series of factors which influence fisheries stocks, such as climate change, pollution and offshore oil platforms. On this last issue the Chair informed the Meeting that American vessels are currently looking for crude oil reserves 30 miles from Marseilles, he further informed the participants about the warnings and objections that have been directed to the French government. The Meeting was once again reminded how important it is that fishers collaborate with the scientific community. In the worst case analysis if crude oil were to leak into the Mediterranean in the same quantities as occurred in Louisiana it would be a disaster as the basin is almost closed.

The representative of Unacomar took the floor addressing the issue of regionalisation and stated that, on the basis of the summary given by the executive secretary, not enough time had been devoted to discussing the role that the RACs should have in the regionalisation process. He affirmed that the only way to make regionalisation operative is to transform the RACs into organisms of the EC.

The Executive Secretary thanked the Unacomar representative for the comments made and underlined that all the RACs have sent a joint request to the European Parliament to strengthen the role of the RACs. For this reason it is crucial to organize a seminar on regionalisation during the GL5 meeting on 19th April, with the coordinator of GAP2 present to facilitate the debate.

The Chair, Mr Kahoul took the floor to thank the participants and to close the meeting.

The meeting finished at 17.00.

