



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/UnitD1/LR

Dear MEDAC Chair and members,

I would like to thank you for your advice in relation to the GFCM SRC-Western Mediterranean - Assessment of EU West Med MAP and future steps (Ref.:135/2025).

On the anticipation of the joint STECF-GFCM benchmark of hake in the western Mediterranean Sea, scientists attending STECF as well as GFCM working groups have indicated that delivering a benchmark takes time. The Commission has continued discussions with GFCM and STECF, together with Spain, on a roadmap and its timing for a benchmark for the first half of 2026. In the meantime, and as done in previous years, the STECF will use up-to-date available data for its stock assessments and management scenarios of the effort regime. Also, as every year, the final advice will be publicly available for all stocks under the MAP before the December AGRIFISH Council.

Regarding blackspot seabream, in May 2025 in Malaga, the GFCM Subregional Committee of the Western Mediterranean discussed the latest scientific information and acknowledged the Management Strategy Evaluation outcomes with nine contrasting candidate harvest control rules (HCRs). However, in Rome on 23-27 June 2025, the GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), noted that more time was needed to evaluate MSE outcomes and to provide an advice on the selection of an HCR in anticipation of the next Annual Session of the GFCM in November 2025. In the context of the development of the rebuilding plan for blackspot seabream, the SAC highlighted the possibility to adopt complementary measures for the long-term management plan for blackspot seabream, with discussions on the potential establishment of spatial closures targeting juvenile hotspots.

As regards the EU West Med MAP, it remains a priority for the Commission to monitor its good implementation and advance on scientific data, in order to lead to positive results

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in stocks recovery, opening the possibility to apply for instance the 20% variability provision for certain geographical areas. The setting of fishing opportunities is a science-based exercise using data submitted by Member States and the best available scientific advice. Moving to lesser reductions in trawling effort is conditional to the recovery of the stocks, as evidenced by the best available verified and peer-reviewed scientific advice provided by STECF.

Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

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