



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

**FAO Workshop on the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries (DSF) and
Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) in the Mediterranean Sea
(in collaboration with GFCM)**

18-20 July 2016, FAO HQ, Rome, Italy

Information note

General background

The *International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries in the High Seas* (the FAO Deep-sea Fisheries Guidelines; FAO 2008) provides guidance to States and regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements (RFMO/As) on the long-term conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources in the high seas. This includes preventing **significant adverse impacts** (SAIs) on **vulnerable marine ecosystems** (VMEs) by bottom contact fishing gears. This greatly assists with the implementation of paragraph 83 (and more generally paragraphs 80-86) of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 61/105 (2006) as well as the more recent resolutions 64/72, 65/38 and 66/68. FAO has developed a full programme to support the implementation of the FAO Deep-sea Fisheries Guidelines consistent with the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF). This includes the VME portal and database¹ that raises awareness on VMEs to fishery policy makers, managers, scientists, conservation community, fishing industry, and the public. The FAO ABNJ Deep-sea Project² (funded by GEF and Partners) supports sustainable deep-sea fisheries and biodiversity conservation throughout the world's oceans. FAO has organized regional VME workshops in the Indian, North Pacific, Southeast Atlantic, and the western central Atlantic Oceans, that have facilitated information-sharing and discussion on issues related to VMEs.

Regional background

The Mediterranean Sea covers 2.5 million km² with approximately 60% being deeper than 1 000 m and 40% deeper than 2 000 m. It is surrounded by a large number of States in varying stages of economic development and showing diverse political systems. The Mediterranean Sea is considered to be rich in biodiversity, with more than 700 described species of marine vertebrates.

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of FAO was established in 1949 to monitor and manage fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Since its establishment, GFCM has made considerable progress in working with States to promote sustainable fisheries and healthy ecosystems. The Coastal States have also benefited from the support of several large FAO subregional projects since 1999 and this has assisted greatly in the fisheries management process. GFCM has adopted various binding measures, with many focusing on fishery data collection and monitoring control and

¹ <http://www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/en/>

² <http://www.commonoceans.org/deep-seas-biodiversity/en/>

surveillance (MCS). Vessel registries, vessel monitoring systems and the use of logbooks are being developed and time series of catch and effort statistics are sufficient to allow for the assessments of some commercial stocks. This all allows for improved mapping of the fisheries and better understanding of impacts on both fish stocks and associated species.

To protect the marine environment from SAIs, GFCM prohibited the use of towed dredges and trawl nets at any depth beyond 1 000 m in its area of competence in 2005. Soon after, GFCM established four fisheries restricted areas (FRAs), three of which permanently banned bottom fishing activities with towed gears to protect VMEs. There are also several measures that stipulate gear restrictions and thereby protect the long-term future of the fisheries. A number of other measures to safeguard vulnerable marine species, such as sea turtles, seabirds, sharks, and marine mammals from fisheries have also been adopted. Recently, and with inputs stemming from the GFCM Working Group on Marine Protected Areas, the adoption of VME encounter protocols with for the GFCM area of competence is being discussed.

Main objectives

The three-day workshop on management of DSF³ and VMEs in the Mediterranean will review current global practices in the management of deep-sea fisheries, looking at relevant international processes and instruments, particularly those provided by different UNGA resolutions on DSF and VMEs (e.g. UNGA Res. 61/105 and 64/72) and the FAO Deep-sea Fisheries Guidelines. The workshop will aim to characterize deep-sea fisheries in the Mediterranean and address the specific issue of VMEs, with the aim to provide advice to ongoing discussions within GFCM about required management measures to protect these fragile habitats.

Specifically, and within the framework of the FAO Deep-sea Fisheries Guidelines and the various relevant UNGA Resolutions, the workshop will:

- Present the VME concept and the management of DSF;
- Compare VME and related management measures in the Mediterranean with other regions;
- Identify future requirements to establish measures to protect VMEs;
- Support regional collaboration, and the collection and sharing of information.

The workshop will also provide:

- An increased understanding of the global processes to manage DSF and VMEs;
- An increased understanding of FAOs initiatives on deep-sea fisheries and the ABNJ Deep Seas project, including on opportunities for collaboration with ABNJ partners;
- Contributions to a framework that can assist GFCM in the management of DSF and VMEs.

Approach

The workshop is designed to build on the achievements already made in developing the VME process within the Mediterranean and to discuss mechanisms for supporting sustainable deep-sea fisheries within an EAF framework taking into account existing GFCM recommendations and resolutions. Though this workshop focuses on the Mediterranean, it is intended to develop networking mechanisms that allow for an exchange of “best” practices more globally. The meeting will also reflect more generally on the various management mechanisms, including spatial measures, currently used to ensure that fisheries are sustainable under an ecosystem approach. The workshop will be technical in nature and intended to stimulate informal discussion and complement the work of the GFCM. It is expected that the application of the FAO DSF Guidelines will be provide a framework in which to further develop the management of deep-sea fisheries.

³ Note: Deep-sea fisheries for the Mediterranean Sea are here regarded as fisheries that use bottom contact gear in waters deeper than 400 m. Shallower fisheries may be considered if they also extend below 400 m. GFCM Recommendation 29/2005/1 prohibited the use of towed dredges and trawl nets beyond 1000 m of depth. Much of what is discussed in DSF is also relevant to other fisheries (FAO DSF Guidelines, Paras 8-11).

Location and date

King Faisal Room, FAO HQ, Rome, Italy, on 18-20 July 2016.

Language

The meeting will be carried out in English.

Participants

A small group of stakeholders will be invited, including (1) scientists and/or managers from GFCM members, (2) representatives of the fishing industry, (3) representatives from scientific institutes working on issues related to VMEs, (4) representatives from NGO/IGOs and other relevant regional stakeholders, and (5) invited experts on VMEs and DSF.

Funding possibilities

The workshop will be organized and funded by FAO through its Deep-seas Fisheries Programme. Limited funding to cover participation is available.

Please contact Ms Jessica Fuller for further information on funding availability, providing professional details.

Registration

Kindly register your participation at: <http://gfcf796abf2636.sgizmo.com/s3>

Visa

Participants in need of a VISA are required to independently handle their application procedures in due time with the Italian Embassy in their respective countries. Should an invitation letter be needed to support the application, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Jessica Fuller.

Useful links

- Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas <http://www.fao.org/fishery/topic/4440/en>
- Sustainable fisheries management and biodiversity conservation of deep-sea living marine resources and ecosystems in the ABNJ <http://www.commonoceans.org/deep-seas-biodiversity/en/>
- VME Portal and DataBase <http://www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/en/>
- VME regional workshop reports <http://www.fao.org/fishery/topic/166307/en>
- GFCM webpage <http://www.fao.org/gfcm>

Contacts

- For technical matters, please contact Ms Merete Tandstad (merete.tandstad@fao.org) or Mr Tony Thompson (tony.thompson@fao.org), copying the GFCM Secretariat (gfcf-secretariat@fao.org).
- For any other matters, please contact Ms Jessica Fuller (jessica.fuller@fao.org)