



MedSudMed

Report of the Eleventh Meeting of the Coordination Committee

Sliema, Malta, 23-24 April 2013

The conclusions and recommendations given in this and in other documents in the *Assessment and Monitoring of the Fishery Resources and Ecosystems in the Straits of Sicily* Project series are those considered appropriate at the time of preparation. They may be modified in the light of further knowledge gained in subsequent stages of the Project. The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of FAO or MiPAAF or EU concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or concerning the determination of its frontiers or boundaries.

Preface

The Regional Project “Assessment and Monitoring of the Fishery Resources and the Ecosystems in the Straits of Sicily” (MedSudMed) is executed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and funded by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture Food and Forestry Policies (MiPAAF). Since 2012 MedSudMed is cofounded by the Directorate General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs of the European Commission (DG Mare). The Italian Regione Siciliana funded a project aimed at strengthening MedSudMed’s effectiveness on issues related to demersal resources, namely crustaceans for 30 months, starting from April 2011.

MedSudMed promotes scientific cooperation between research institutions of the four participating countries (Italy, Libya, Malta and Tunisia), for the continuous and dynamic assessment and monitoring of the state of the fisheries resources and the ecosystems in this area of the Mediterranean.

Research and training are supported to increase and use knowledge on fisheries ecology and ecosystems, and to create a regional network of expertise. Particular attention is given to the technical coordination of the research between the countries, which should contribute to the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries. Consideration is also given to the development of an appropriate tool for the management and processing of data related to fisheries and their ecosystems.

FAO-MedSudMed Project HQ
FAO FIRF
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Roma
Italy

Tel: +39 06 570 56092/54492
Fax: +39 06 570 55188
e-mail: medsudmed@fao.org
URL: <http://www.faomedsudmed.org>

GCP/RER/010/ITA Publications

MedSudMed Project publications are issued as series of Technical Documents (GCP/RER/010/ITA/MSM-TD-00) and Scientific Reports (GCP/RER/010/ITA/MSM/SR-00) related to meetings, missions and research organized by or conducted within the framework of the Project.

Comments on this document would be welcomed and should be sent to the Project headquarters:

MedSudMed Project
FAO FIRF, Room C351/352
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Roma
Italy
medsudmed@fao.org

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Preparation of this document

This document is the final version of the report of the Eleventh Meeting of the Coordination Committee, organized by the FAO-MedSudMed Project (Assessment and Monitoring of the Fisheries Resources and the Ecosystems in the Straits of Sicily), Sliema, Malta, 23-24 April 2013.

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Report of the Eleventh Meeting of the Coordination Committee, Sliema, Malta, 23-24 April 2013.

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ABSTRACT

The Eleventh Meeting of the MedSudMed Coordination Committee was attended by representatives from the countries participating in the Project (Italy, Libya, Malta and Tunisia), representatives of the Italian Donor (Ministry for Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies, MiPAAF), of the FAO GFCM Secretariat, of the FAO MedSudMed Project as well as of AdriaMed, CopeMed II and EastMed Projects. A brief remind was made on the Project objectives and activities and a presentation of the activities implemented for the MedSudMed components during the inter-session period was made.

The proposed work plan for the next period was discussed and approved. It focuses on the same priorities of standardizing approaches, increasing scientific knowledge on fishery resources and ecosystems, strengthening national expertise and regional cooperation. The report of the FAO independent evaluation of the Project was presented. A positive appraisal of the MedSudMed Project for supporting all the participating countries in the assessment and monitoring of the fisheries resources and for the good job carried out since the beginning was given by the Evaluation Team. The belief that continuing the Project can only bring success and be beneficial for each of the participating countries was affirmed.

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**Draft Report of the 11th Meeting of the MedSudMed Coordination
Committee
Sliema, Malta, 23-24 April 2013**

Opening of the meeting and election of the Chairperson (Agenda Item n. 1)

1. The eleventh meeting of the Coordination Committee of the FAO Regional Project MedSudMed “Assessment and Monitoring of the Fishery Resources and the Ecosystems in the Strait of Sicily” was held in Sliema, Malta on 23-24 April 2013 kindly hosted by the Maltese Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Ecosystem and Climate change (MSDEC).
2. The meeting was attended by a representative of the Donor, the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies (MiPAAF), representatives from the countries participating in the Project (Italy, Libya, Malta and Tunisia), representatives of other FAO Regional Projects (AdriaMed, CopeMed II and EastMed), representatives of the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (FAO GFCM) Secretariat, as well as the staff of the FAO MedSudMed Project. The list of participants is provided in Annex A.
3. The FAO MedSudMed Project Coordinator, Mr Enrico Arneri, took the floor and greeted the Delegations, he thanked the MSDEC for hosting the Coordination Committee meeting. He welcomed the participants to Malta, where the Project Coordination Committee was hosted for the third time. He thanked the Donors for their continuous support to the activities of the Project and he informed the Meeting that a set of documents prepared by the Project staff had been distributed to the participants both in paper and electronic version in a USB pen drive.
4. Ms Mifsud, Maltese representative of the MSDEC was proposed and elected as Chairperson for this session of the MedSudMed Coordination Committee.
5. Ms Mifsud welcomed the participants, thanked the Project Donors for their continuous support and MedSudMed for its role and support in the development of cooperation and for joint activities on fisheries research in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. She mentioned that, in the last years, strong cooperation among research institutions was developed in the region and relevant scientific results were achieved also thanks to the support provided by MedSudMed. Ms Mifsud also mentioned the preliminary steps done recently to involve also fisheries administrations of the south-central Mediterranean Sea in the cooperative framework supported by the Project. In this respect she looked forward for further progress, thus ensuring that the scientific results achieved could be used by national administrations to progress in developing a common view on fisheries management. She reiterated the importance of finding synergies within the newly established GFCM Framework Programme (2013-2018) as the GFCM is the final place where fisheries management is discussed in the

Mediterranean Sea. The meeting was wished every success and in particular it was hoped that the results of this Coordination Committee meeting would entail the continuation of MedSudMed activities.

6. The Executive Secretary of the GFCM thanked the host institution for the invitation, greeted the participants and expressed great interest in the outcome of the MedSudMed meeting.
7. The representative of Libya thanked the host Ministry for its support for the participation in the meeting. He particular stressed the importance of the constant support of the Project Donors, which fosters the cooperation now solidly established in the Project area.
8. The representative of Tunisia thanked the Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Ecosystem and Climate change for hosting the meeting and the MedSudMed Project for the support given to the countries, as it provided a chance for cooperation with other institutions in the south-central Mediterranean Sea, as well as the opportunity to participate in and carry out important scientific activities at international level. He also brought the greetings of the Director General of the INSTM that, for unforeseen commitments, could not join the meeting.
9. On behalf of the Government of Italy and in particular of the Ministry for Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies (MiPAAF), Mr Mauro Bertelletti from the Fisheries Directorate thanked the MSDEC for the kind hospitality and the Project for the work carried out so far.
10. The representatives of the CopeMed II and EastMed Projects in thanking the hosting institution reiterated the importance of cooperation among the Mediterranean Projects in order to optimize the resources and find common synergies.

Adoption of the Agenda (Agenda Item n. 2)

11. The Agenda was presented to the Coordination Committee. The Chair invited the participants to offer any comments. The participants indicated and agreed on some minor amendments for optimization of the day. The amended Agenda was adopted (Annex B).

Report on the Project's Progress (Agenda Item n.3)

12. The Project Fishery Monitoring Expert, Mr Luca Ceriola, introduced this agenda item and the document "Report on Project progress", in which the main activities carried out by MedSudMed from March 2012 to March 2013 are described. The activities carried out correspond to the work programme and recommendations of the 10th Meeting of the MedSudMed Coordination Committee and the conclusions of the FAO independent evaluation carried out in 2012.

13. The activities carried out during the inter-committee period comply with the methodological framework of the Project and its mandate for the current phase.
14. It was remarked how often the Project together with the national experts has developed its work in full coherence with the priorities set by the FAO GFCM and its first Framework Programme 2013-2018 (GFCM FMW) to progress towards the formulation of sound scientific advice for the needs of fisheries management.
15. The Coordination Committee was informed that the relations and synergies with the participating countries were further strengthened, and greater coordination was sought with the Donors. This contributed to the improved implementation of the Project activities, as several specific, technical meetings were held with National Focal Points and representatives of fisheries research institutions.
16. The main areas of intervention of the Project were recalled: 1) Support the scientific standardization of the methodologies applied in the relevant studies related to fishery resources and to the relationships between fishery resources, biotic and abiotic factors; 2) Improve the scientific knowledge on fishery resources and their ecosystem in the Project area through the finalization of the research activities program; 3) Strengthen the national expertise through on-the-job training and working groups, and support the national research institutions in enhancing scientific expertise; 4) Strengthen and support scientific cooperation between the different experts and institutions involved in the Project activities; 5) Strengthen the technical and scientific cooperation at Mediterranean level, among the participating countries and between the Project, the FAO GFCM and other FAO Regional Projects.
17. On the basis of standardised protocols previously agreed on by participating institutions, field work and on-the-job training exercises were implemented for each component of the Project. MedSudMed also initiated discussion on the medium and long term activities of the Project and a draft work plan was produced.
18. Where demersal resources are concerned, the Meeting was informed that the Project organised a Study Group on the Joint Processing of Survey Data. During the meeting national experts completed the following tasks: i) completed the processing of the data collected during the MedSudMed inter-calibration exercise at sea and estimated inter-calibration factors for *Parapenaeus longirostris* and *Merluccius merluccius*; ii) identified the best approach to standardise the past survey data; iii) initiated a joint exercise to obtain abundance indices per km² and length frequency structures for some species; iv) produced preliminary maps of nurseries and spawning grounds of *Merluccius merluccius* in the Project area; and v) provided a rough description of the state of the stock of *M. merluccius* using direct (fishery independent) methods.
19. The Project also organised an *ad hoc* meeting on trawl survey protocols involving Italian and Libyan scientists and, in collaboration with the FAO Marine and inland Water Service (FIRF), provided technical support to initiate the allocation and

mapping sampling stations in specific Project areas. The bathymetric stratification foreseen in the MEDITS protocol was followed.

20. Further to these activities, the Project organised the annual meeting of the MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources (WG-DEM). The WG-DEM also focused on the appraisal of the state of selected demersal shared stocks and fisheries in GSAs 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16, i.e. *Parapenaeus longirostris* and *Merluccius merluccius*. During the meeting discussion was also held on the tools available for a bio-economic analysis of fisheries in the south-central Mediterranean Sea and on the identification of a case study to be developed with the support of the Project. In this context the WG-DEM agreed to initiate a case study using both bio-economic models and empirical indicators on the fisheries targeting *P. longirostris*. The WG-DEM was also called to discuss and define a medium-long term work plan for possible joint activities to be carried out in the framework of the Project. The stock assessments produced by the WG-DEM on *Parapenaeus longirostris* and *Merluccius merluccius* were presented and discussed during the GFCM-SAC Working Group on Stock Assessment of Demersal Species, held in Croatia in November 2012.
21. In the context of activities on shared stocks, the Coordination Committee was informed that, during the inter-committee period, the genomic comparison of *O. vulgaris* samples collected in the entire Project area was carried out in collaboration with the University of Oviedo (Spain) and the Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer (INSTM). In particular, all the samples collected were processed and the comparison of results for the identification of population structure was initiated. As follow up of the study supported by the Project, a scientific paper was published in 2012: Genetic structure of *Octopus vulgaris* (Cephalopoda, Octopodidae) in the central Mediterranean Sea inferred from the mitochondrial COIII gene (*Comptes Rendus Biologies* 335:625-636).
22. The Meeting was also informed that, due to the importance of demersal crustaceans for the fisheries in the south-central Mediterranean Sea, the Project supported the drafting of a technical review on these species. This activity resulted in the preparation of a preliminary compilation of information on the biology, distribution, fishery, stock status and relevant normative framework for fisheries of Spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*), and of shallow and deep water shrimps (e.g. *Metapenaeus monoceros*, *Aristaeomorpha foliacea* and *Parapenaeus longirostris*).
23. The Project, in cooperation with CopeMed II, organised a Workshop on fisheries and appraisal of *Palinurus elephas* in the south-central and western Mediterranean Sea. During the meeting, the gaps in available data were mentioned and the possibility for scientific activities to progress towards achieving a proper description of the stock(s) and relative fisheries in support of fisheries management regimes for *P. elephas* in the Projects' area were discussed and agreed on.
24. Further key activities related to demersal resources included discussion of closed seasons as a fisheries management option. During an *ad hoc* meeting (February 2012),

the case study of the Gulf of Gabès was illustrated with a view to the future harmonization of national closed seasons for bottom trawl fisheries operating in this area. During the inter-committee period, the Project supported the preparation of a background document including an overview of the existing information on the demersal resources and bottom trawl fisheries operating in the Gulf of Gabès and a technical proposal for the harmonisation of the closed season for trawl fisheries operating in the Gulf of Gabès currently in place at national level.

25. The Committee was informed that, in the inter-committee period, particular importance was given to enlarging and consolidating the group of researchers involved in studies on small pelagic fish. In this framework, Project supported the joint processing of the ichthyoplankton samples and acoustic data collected during the 2010 MedSudMed surveys carried out in Libyan waters. This activity was carried out in cooperation between the IAMC-CNR of Capo Granitola (Italy) and the MBRC of Tajura (Libya). In particular all the samples collected were processed. These activities provided new information in terms of oceanographic characteristics, composition and spatial distribution of the ichthyoplankton, transport of eggs and larvae of commercial fish and overall abundance of small pelagic species. The preparation of a comprehensive report of the survey comprising all the results obtained was initiated.
26. Where the standardisation of methodologies is concerned, the Project advised the Committee that an *ad hoc* meeting was organised by the Project in La Goulette, Tunisia (May-June 2012). During the meeting the sampling scheme and the work plan for an inter-calibration exercise at sea on acoustic survey for small pelagic fish between the Tunisian (R/V Hannibal) and Italian (R/V Dallaporta) research vessels was established. Experts from Italy (IAMC-CNR Capo Granitola) and Tunisia (INSTM of La Goulette) participated in the meeting.
27. The annual MedSudMed Working Group on Small Pelagic Fishery Resources was organised. During the meeting the ongoing national and international programmes on small pelagic stocks were outlined and discussed. The technical details of the MedSudMed inter-calibration exercise at sea for acoustic surveys and data processing were examined by experts from all the MedSudMed area. A tentative plan for the implementation of joint oceanographic and ichthyoplankton surveys at sea was agreed on. The working group also outlined the activities to be included in the medium- and long-term work plan for the Project.
28. On the matter of shared resources, in collaboration with AdriaMed, CopeMed II and EastMed, the Project coordinated the collection of samples of *Coryphaena hippurus* in the entire Mediterranean region for genomic analysis, as information on discrimination among stock units of this species is still scarce in the Mediterranean. This activity is connected with the project RITMARE, funded by the Italian Ministry for Research and University (MIUR) through the National Council for Research (CNR).

29. The Committee was reminded that capacity development activities are transversal to MedSudMed activities. In the inter-committee period cooperation was also sought with the other FAO Projects in the Mediterranean to create synergies on common training activities, broadening the perspective of the actions planned and providing a wider group of young Mediterranean experts with the possibility to develop harmonised skills and discuss issues of common interest.
30. The training courses organised, as well as on-the-job training sessions were an occasion to strengthen scientific collaboration and to exchange competencies between institutes, as they involved scientists belonging to the network that was created and consolidated by the Project. Some of the training related activities provided the possibility for joint processing of survey data and aimed not only at enhancing capacity development but also for producing scientific information directly related to the Project activities.
31. Coordination was strengthened with all counterparts: as indicated in the past by the Coordination Committee and also by the FAO Independent Evaluation, the Project strengthened the liaison with the Donors (MiPAAF, Regione Siciliana and EU-DG-MARE) and intensified the coordination meetings with them as well as with the other Regional Projects, Donors and FAO FIRF. Coordination was also enhanced further by supporting participation of regional experts in workshops, trainings, meetings, seminars and conferences organised in the Mediterranean area. Close interaction was also maintained with the FAO Regional Projects AdriaMed, CopeMed II, EastMed, and Med-Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (MedSea-LME)” Project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Cooperation was further sustained with the FAO GFCM Secretariat and the FAO GFCM Subsidiary bodies.
32. The Committee members expressed their general satisfaction with the activities carried out and commented that the briefing provided by the Project made evident the amount of scientific achievements compared with the given, defined objectives. In particular, the progress made towards the harmonization of closed season for fisheries in the Gulf of Gabès were acknowledged both in terms of their current state and the future options and actions to be considered for fishery sustainability under an international scheme. In recalling the background that led to the initial request by Tunisia for MedSudMed support, the meeting concurred on the important role of the Project in providing the appropriate framework to facilitate the initial discussion among research institutes and fisheries administrations.
33. The Executive Secretary of the GFCM expressed his appreciation to the Project for its continued contribution to the GFCM in terms of presentation of results to the relevant *fora*. He recalled that the GFCM is in the process of organising a Sub-Regional Workshop on Management Plans for the Western, Central and Eastern Mediterranean (Tunisia, 24-27 June 2013). The Workshop is one of the activities launched under the Framework Programme and aims to advance in the implementation of the GFCM guidelines for multi-annual management plans for fisheries exploiting shared resources according to a sub-regional approach. He stressed the importance of the

support of the participating countries as well as of the FAO Mediterranean Projects to identify case studies to be addressed by the Workshop. The MedSudMed activity on closed season for fisheries in the Gulf of Gabès could be an appropriate case study to start with.

34. Recalling the example of the Gulf of Lion, he suggested that a similar action could be envisaged for the Gulf of Gabès, defining specific restrictions to fisheries operating in the area. In particular a Fisheries Restricted Area (FRA) with temporary closure of fisheries during the year could be established following the GFCM procedure. This would involve the preparation of a joint proposal to be presented at the GFCM SAC. The meeting discussed the nature of the measures to be proposed for the fisheries operating in the Gulf of Gabès and concurred on the need to proceed toward harmonization of national regulations. The establishment of a FRA could be an initial step towards harmonised multi-annual management plan covering the area.
35. The representative of Italy recalled the activities carried out in synergy within the RITMARE project, funded by Italian MIUR. He also informed the participants on the forthcoming steps of the initiative that foresee the application of the same approached used for *C. hippurus* to other species like *Mullus barbatus* and *Parapenaeus longirostris*. The general aim of this activity is to provide evidence of fishery resources stock unit(s) in the Mediterranean and in the Straits of Sicily in particular. He therefore informed the participants on the availability of some funds to pursue such genetic studies.
36. The representative of the MiPAAF thanked the Project for the excellent job done in preparing the presentation of the last year's activities. He noted the importance of the activities carried out to improve knowledge on fisheries and fisheries resources and to empower their monitoring in the area. He also acknowledged the importance of FAO Mediterranean Projects in the wider scheme of FAO strategies of development of sustainable use and conservation of fisheries resources in the Mediterranean and reiterated the strategic role that they can play in the future within the GFCM Framework Programme.
37. In this respect he remarked on the importance for Italy of the MedSudMed Project and the Mediterranean Projects in general and the hope of a successful continuity of activities in the future thus contributing directly and indirectly to the achievement of the general objectives of the GFCM. While recalling the difficult financial situation and the possible future constraints on budget, the representative of the Donor reiterated the willingness of Italy to continue supporting the Project activities through the MiPAAF. Due to this consideration and to the excellent results obtained by MedSudMed in giving technical support to the countries, regional networking services through multidisciplinary approach, he reiterated the importance, for the next year, of further optimising cost-effectiveness of planned activities to better cope with the limited resources.

38. The Executive Secretary of the GFCM congratulated the Project for the large amount of activities carried out in spite of the limited resources. Mentioning the economic crisis that is affecting countries all around the Mediterranean, he expressed his concern about the future of the Project. To improve the effectiveness of activities he proposed further strengthening of interactions with the GFCM in identifying possible innovative administrative approaches that can ameliorate the current financial and temporal perspective of the Projects.

The outcome of the FAO independent evaluation, 2012

39. The Project staff gave a brief presentation concerning the conclusions reached in the framework of the Independent Evaluation carried out by FAO in 2012. The Committee was reminded that the objective of the final evaluation was to provide accountability to the participating Member Countries and resource partners on the extent of Projects' result, and to draw lessons and formulate recommendations for the potential future role and strategies of the four Projects evaluated.

40. The Evaluation team noted that the Projects aimed at achieving a homogeneous level of knowledge and expertise that would allow ecosystem-oriented activities and common, sustainable, fisheries management to be established. These objectives were based on the identification of priority research topics and training requirements according to the needs of the fisheries research institutions in the MedSudMed countries as well as GFCM recommendations. The Evaluation found strong evidence that the projects had been well managed and their strategies had been consistent with the expressed requirements of the participating countries.

41. In the four years preceding the Evaluation, the funds allocated to the projects were found to have been managed coherently with the events of the projects. Regional scientific cooperation concerning fisheries science has been successfully established in the Project area; common methodologies were developed and implemented through organizing joint field training activities and surveys at sea; also, projects have succeeded in strengthening expertise at national levels and in tackling the main aspects of the planned technical work. There is now a very good level of spontaneous cooperation in the sub region.

42. It was observed that some improvements could promote the MedSudMed experience as a possible model for a programme approach on scientific cooperation concerning shared resource management and ensure full sustainability of the results achieved so far by the absence of an adequate consolidation and long-term partnership development strategy.

43. The Committee was informed on the five recommendations made in the Evaluation report aimed to improve the FAO internal efficiency when the management of the Project is concerned, the visibility of the Project achievements through increased number of technical documents produced and the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF)

when technical discussion on fisheries management is concerned. In addition, all parties concerned, i.e. the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, GCP/RER/010/ITA and GFCM Secretariat, should develop a road-map to be proposed to partners for discussion, endorsement and funding, that would allow the integration of MedSudMed achievements within the 2013-2018 GFCM Framework Programme.

44. The Executive Secretary of the GFCM wished to acknowledge the cooperation established between the FAO Projects with the GFCM, which has always proved to be very effective in supporting the work of the Commission and of its subsidiary bodies and called for further strengthening in this direction.
45. He informed the participants on the progress of the GFCM reform and on steps taken towards the amendment of the GFCM agreement. In this perspective, sub-regionalization is one of the main means that the GFCM envisages to put in place for the management of fisheries in the Mediterranean region. He stressed the importance of further strengthening cooperation and synergies in the region in order to optimize the existing resources. He also emphasized the importance of following a qualitative approach that would lead to a reduction in the number of activities and to their prompt implementation.
46. He also recalled that, since the first formulation of the FAO Projects in the late nineties, regional and sub-regional priorities have changed and both the Projects and GFCM faced ever-new challenges. In this respect, he hypothesized that the moment may have arrived for a revision of the Projects' mandate in order to better cope with the new, growing priorities and emerging issues in Mediterranean fisheries.
47. Moreover he renewed his conviction that the continuation of the Project is beneficial for all participating countries and for the GFCM itself. He therefore envisaged an increased "sustainability" of the Projects over a time period of 3-5 years, thus providing the possibility to improve planning capacity in consideration of the Projects' tasks and mandate.
48. The representatives of the FAO Mediterranean Projects concurred on the importance of continuing to foster cooperation with the countries and with the GFCM. They recalled the efforts made by the Projects to optimize resources, to find synergies, to reinforce common activities among them and stressed the need to take into due account budget availability in order to fulfill the tasks by dealing with the fisheries system as a whole.

FAO GFCM work plan for the next intersessional period (Agenda item XX)

49. The scientific and technical activities foreseen in the FAO GFCM work plan for 2013 were presented to the Meeting by the Secretary Executive of the GFCM. Discussion was initiated on how the activities foreseen by the Project are integrated and will contribute to the First GFCM Framework Programme (2013-2018).

50. He recalled the GFCM Framework Programme (2013-2018) with its 5 work programmes (4 thematic and 1 geographical) with actions and activities to be implemented with approval through *ad hoc* arrangements with donors on a multi-annual multi-donor basis.
51. The Committee was informed that the activities already endorsed by the GFCM for 2013 are related to: i) strengthening of data collection in the Mediterranean and in the Black Sea; ii) testing the feasibility of implementing the GFCM guidelines for the management plans; iii) Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, monitoring control and surveillance (MCS) and regional fleet; iv) concerted actions for Lebanon; v) the cooperation for the sustainable use of the marine biological resources in the Mediterranean; vi) enhancing the development of artisanal fisheries.
52. A description of the activities agreed by the Scientific Advisory Committee to be presented to the next GFCM session was given for the regular programme and the Framework Programme. To complete the information, the activity concerning the workshop on sustainable artisanal fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea was briefly outlined.
53. Subsequently, the presentation focused on the work initiated on fisheries data collection and management plans. He recalled the meeting held in Frascati (Italy, March 2013) on data collection in March 2013 aimed at i) improving the efficiency of the GFCM data collection framework at sub-regional level; ii) improving the definition of the data; and iii) improving efficiency of the submission tools and the harmonization of GFCM requirements with national data collection systems. He then referred to the forthcoming meeting on management plans planned in June 2013 with the objectives of: i) identifying case studies in the region; ii) defining the feasibility of multi-annual management plans (design strategy, discuss on general objectives and proposed actions to address emerging issues, etc.).
54. During the ensuing discussion, the Committee expressed general agreement with the principle and activities presented and in particular with the need to test the feasibility of implementing the GFCM Guidelines for the development of multi-annual fisheries management plans.
55. The representative of Tunisia recalled to the participants that, during the last SAC meeting, his country volunteered to host the GFCM meeting on bio-economic models. Moreover he stressed the importance of addressing the issue of interaction between artisanal fisheries, aquaculture and other fisheries within the GFCM framework programme and in the forthcoming GFCM meeting on Artisanal Fisheries (Malta, November 2013).
56. Additional details were provided on the forthcoming GFCM meeting on fisheries management plan by Mr Marcelo Vasconcellos. He recalled the GFCM “Guidelines on a general management framework and presentation of scientific information for multiannual management plans for sustainable fisheries in the GFCM area”, endorsed

by the 36th session of GFCM. The objective of these guidelines were illustrated as well as the steps foreseen in the implementation of any management plan in the region. The issues to be addressed to assess the technical feasibility of any management proposal were also described.

57. With this aim, he brought the Meeting's attention to the example of the work carried out in the Adriatic area, in cooperation with the AdriaMed Project. The process, initiated by the AdriaMed Project was then developed in a GFCM meeting on management plans (Croatia, March 2013), where a general agreement was found on i) emerging issues and priorities for the management of small pelagic fisheries; ii) draft objectives, reference points management points and research needs and iii) a strategy towards the development of a management plan. The proposed future steps in the process identified by the Adriatic countries were presented, entailing: i) the revision of the background document prepared; ii) the validation of the document by the GFCM Task Force and presented to the 37 GFCM; iii) the creation of a specific working group within AdriaMed to continue discussion on fisheries management plans.
58. He then introduced the expected objectives and methodologies to be followed in the preparation of the GFCM Workshop on management plans in the Western, Central and Eastern Mediterranean therefore replicating the experience of the Adriatic Sea. The Workshop is planned to be held in Tunisia from 24 to 27 June 2013. Some candidate case studies to be dealt with during the Workshop were presented.
59. Regarding the case studies proposed, the Committee agreed that, where the central southern Mediterranean is concerned, priority should be given to the fisheries exploiting *Parapenaeus longirostris* and associated species. The choice was related to the amount of information and activities carried out and ongoing on this species/fishery since 2009 (e.g. joint stock assessment, integration of fishery dependent and fishery independent information, initial steps for a bio-economic analysis).
60. The Committee reiterated that MedSudMed and the GFCM could provide the proper framework for initiating and developing discussion on management of these fisheries respectively. The participants also agreed that the process leading to the development of a management plan foresees several steps and requires the appropriate timing.
61. The representative of Tunisia, while welcoming the new approach of the GFCM to the management of fisheries in the Mediterranean, expressed some "concerns" on the selection of the National Focal Points for this task and on the use of conservative Reference Point (RP) according to a precautionary approach. He stressed the important role of the GFCM National Focal Point in this regard. He was reassured by the GFCM staff that TORs have been prepared to ensure close cooperation with all the parties involved and a proper, timely follow up to the requirements of the GFCM.

Development of the Project's Programme for the next period (Agenda Item 4)

62. The MedSudMed Project Coordinator, introduced the document "Project Future Implementation". The Meeting was informed that the Project, in collaboration with the participating institutions, will focus its attention on research activities in support to fisheries management, the filling of scientific gaps related to the knowledge on fisheries, fisheries resources and the ecosystem, the finalisation of pending publications and the capacity development component. All the planned activities are integrated and will also contribute to the development of the newly established GFCM Framework Programme 2013-2018.
63. The work plan for the next inter-committee period will respect the Project areas of intervention: demersal and small pelagic fisheries resources; training and national capacity development; communications (web site and technical documents); regional cooperation.
64. The Committee was informed that, where demersal fisheries resources are concerned, the Project will provide technical support to the participating research institutions to plan and put in place the collection of fishery dependent and independent data. In this framework, discussion on the harmonisation of calendar for trawl surveys in the Project area will be promoted.
65. The Project foresees the organisation of the annual meeting of the MedSudMed Working Group on demersal fisheries resources. Technical support to the organisation of activities that aim to monitor natural resources and fisheries in Libya will also be provided. The WG will plan common or joint research activities and review the current knowledge on the demersal fisheries species in the Project area. Support will be given to the appraisal already initiated on *Parapenaeus longirostris* and on *Merluccius merluccius* stock and on beginning stock assessment on other species like *Mullus spp.*. Technical discussion is due to begin on the fisheries of *Aristeomorpha foliacea* and on an *ad hoc* activity on selected species like Spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*).
66. The MedSudMed Study Group for the joint processing of survey data will continue its activities aimed at the standardisation and joint analysis of historical trawl survey data, as well as the identification of nurseries and spawning grounds for fisheries target species starting from *M. merluccius* and *P. longirostris*. The possibility to carry out the joint analysis of survey data place back to back with MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources will be explored.
67. Regarding the preparation of technical documents, the MedSudMed review on demersal crustaceans will be finalised. In addition, discussion will be held on the drafting of: i) a MedSudMed Technical Document on the 2011 inter-calibration exercise at sea; ii) the results of the multi-disciplinary study conducted on *Octopus vulgaris* stocks and fisheries in the south-central Mediterranean.

68. The Project will support the development of a case study for the bio-economic analysis of the demersal fisheries targeting *P. longirostris*. The Project will also continue to be involved in the genomic comparison of *Coryphaena hippurus*.
69. Where fisheries management is concerned, the Project will act as facilitator promoting the discussion on the definition and the harmonization of management plans regarding fisheries sharing resources in the south-central Mediterranean. In this view, the Project will further support the process toward the harmonisation of closed season for bottom trawl fisheries operating in the Gulf of Gabès. In addition, synergies will be sought with the GFCM within its Framework Programme to define case studies for the implementation of the GFCM guidelines for sub-regional fisheries management plans.
70. The Project drew the Meeting's attention to the planned activities concerning small pelagic species. The annual MedSudMed Working Group (WG) on Small Pelagic Fishery Resources is tentatively planned to take place in the second semester of 2013. The meeting will aim to: i) discuss results of joint activities carried out in 2013 and plan possible follow up; ii) define priorities to be addressed to progress in the monitoring and appraisal of the state of small pelagic fish and fisheries; iii) progress in the organisation of joint surveys at sea to be carried out in the short and medium term.
71. Support for the joint processing of samples and data collected during the MedSudMed cooperative surveys at sea will continue. Efforts will be made to achieve the finalisation of the reports of surveys carried out in 2010 in Libyan waters. With this aim, the sharing of information and data will be supported by the Project, as well as technical discussion on the contents and structure of the survey reports.
72. The organisation of a Study Group for the joint processing of ichthyoplankton data collected through the years during national and international surveys is foreseen. During the Study Group synthesis of existing data and information on ichthyoplankton will be carried out and the possibility of mapping the concentration and retention areas in the entire Project area will be explored. To optimise resources, the Study Group could be organised during the same week as the MedSudMed Working Group on Small Pelagic Fisheries Resources.
73. In view of the continued efforts towards the standardization of data collection and processing in the south-central Mediterranean, the Project, in cooperation with the participating institutes, will continue supporting the organisation and conduction of standardised acoustic and ichthyoplankton surveys, with particular attention to areas that are not regularly monitored, upon request of the participating institutes. Wherever possible, calendars of acoustic and ichthyoplankton surveys at sea carried out by the different participating institutes will be coordinated in order to maximise the coverage and minimise the time lag between surveys conducted by the different vessels. In this framework, an inter-calibration exercise at sea for acoustic surveys between the Tunisian R/V Hannibal and the Italian R/V Dallaporta is being organised, and the possibility to carry out a joint oceanographic and ichthyoplankton survey in Libyan waters will be explored.

74. The information system of the Project will be updated. In this context, the delegate from Malta reiterated the usefulness of the ftp created in occasion of the Working Groups/Study Groups that facilitated the data sharing among the research institutions. The participants concurred on the need to further disseminate and circulate the data/information available in the Project area among the participating institutions where technical meetings and discussions are concerned.
75. The representative of Italy then proposed to create a section in the Project web site to list and, whenever possible, make available all the scientific publications prepared and issued as results of the cooperative framework established by the Project. The committee agreed on the importance of this proposal as it would ensure higher visibility to the work carried out so far by the research institutes and the Project.
76. Regarding the joint surveys at sea, the representatives of Italy and Tunisia recalled the calendar availability of the R/V Dallaporta and R/V Hannibal for the inter-calibration exercise at sea for acoustic surveys. According to the vessel availability, the joint exercise at sea shall take place during the week between 20 and 27 June 2013. The Project will provide technical support and coordination for the smooth implementation of the activity.
77. The Committee was also informed on the calendar of activities of the R/V Urania for the implementation of a joint oceanographic and ichthyoplankton survey in the western Libyan waters, i.e. 17-25 July 2013. In this respect the representative of Libya informed the participants that the procedures to request permission for the survey can be initiated. The Project will coordinate the planning of the survey, also providing the necessary technical assistance.
78. Some discussion ensued on the need to cover the entire Project area, in the future, with a single survey, either acoustic or ichthyoplankton as well as oceanographic. The participants were reminded that this request was one of the results of the Working Group on Small Pelagic Fishery Resources carried out in January 2013. To meet this need, the joint survey has been included in the medium-long term work plan for the Project activities and it is expected to be planned for 2014. Taking into consideration the extent of the area to be covered by the survey and the importance of reducing the time of the survey, the concurrent availability of the Italian and Tunisian research vessels will be necessary.
79. The representative of Tunisia informed the participants that acoustic surveys have been carried out in his country since 1988 in summer time, and that the R/V Hannibal could also be available during Summer 2014 provided that the activity is included in the calendar of activities before November 2013. The Committee agreed on the challenging nature of this activity but also agreed to proceed and called for a meeting to initiate the planning phase of a joint survey covering the entire Project area, to be carried out in summer 2014. The discussion to plan the survey will be initiated during the Project Working Group on Small Pelagic Fishery Resources.

80. The representative of Tunisia informed the participants on the situation of research activities in his country. Data collection is on-going for several demersal and small pelagic species, the stock assessment targeting *Parapenaeus longirostris* and *Merluccius merluccius* is on-going using three years of data covering three GSAs. The INSTM also initiated the process to appraise the state of the stock for other relevant species like *Mullus barbatus* and *M. surmuletus*. In addition, taking into consideration the efforts made to harmonize the calendar surveys at sea, the Committee was informed that bottom trawl surveys are foreseen to be carried out in GSAs 13 and 14 on May-June 2013 initiating in GSA 13.
81. Regarding the future activities on *Coryphaena hippurus*, the Executive Secretary of the GFCM recalled the Recommendation GFCM/30/2006/2 for the “ establishment of a closed season for the dolphin fish fisheries using fishing aggregation devices (FADs)” made as follow up of the work carried out within the framework of CopeMed. He reiterated that any action should be in line with the recommendations in place and that robust cooperation in the region, among the Mediterranean Projects and the GFCM, should be envisaged. The Committee agreed that the Project will continue the work initiated in 2011 on sharing information and assessment of stock status of *C. hippurus*. Cooperation with CopeMed II and other FAO Projects in the Mediterranean will be sought on this issue.
82. With regard to the optimization of human and financial resources, the Executive Secretary of the GFCM reiterated the importance of taking the necessary steps to avoid overlapping of efforts and activities. Specifically he provided the example of the Coordination Committee meetings, pointing out that in a year the four Projects convene their respective Coordination Committees at different times of the year in different countries (while the countries involved are in some cases almost the same as the Projects and GFCM staff). He was therefore proposing to hold a single Coordination Committee meeting lasting 2-3 days with dedicated sessions for each Project. The meeting could be organized in FAO premises thus reducing the use of resources (in financial and human terms) and maximizing the presence of all the parties concerned.
83. The Committee, while recognizing that the proposal could have a positive impact on the financial resources of the Projects, reiterated the role of the Coordination Committee in terms of ownership of the Project. The Coordination Committee meeting is the steering body of the Project and it represents the highest expression of the mandate of the countries. The Committee considered postponing the proposal, as pilot action, in 2015 to test the feasibility of a week dedicated to the Coordination Committee meetings of all the Projects. The Committee agreed that if a pilot action were taken in this direction, the joint meeting could be hosted by each participating country in turn.
84. The representative of CopeMed II summarised the work carried out by CopeMed II and reported the workplan endorsed by the Coordination Committee meeting held in

April 2013. He underlined the activities that can be carried out in cooperation with MedSudMed and the other regional Projects. Activities concerning implication in the GEF MEDSea Project and the GFCM FP were also mentioned. The Committee agreed that the organisation of the Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources could be organized in coordination with CopeMed II.

85. The Committee agreed that synergies between FAO Projects should be sought whenever possible. In this respect the participants agreed that MedSudMed should foster cooperation with CopeMed II and co-organise activities when technically appropriate, with the final objective of providing better results and making the best possible use of existing resources.
86. The representative of the EastMed Project referred to proposed study on the deep water shrimp species *Aristeomorpha foliacea* and *Aristaeus antennatus*. She informed the meeting that these species are also well studied in the Eastern Mediterranean and data are available (including genetic data for the entire Mediterranean region). She proposed the joint organization of the planned Working Group on these species with the EastMed Project, by combining all the countries participating in the two Projects in a common exercise. This would represent a first step towards the identification of common actions to be followed in view of the preparation of a case study on possible management plans for fisheries targeting these two stocks. The Committee acknowledged the importance of the proposal.
87. The representative of EastMed informed the meeting on the forthcoming EastMed training course on CPUE data organized the first week of June in Turkey and welcomed the participation of any experts from the MedSudMed countries.
88. After thorough discussion and comment on the content of the Document CC/11/03, the Committee agreed on the programme of activities proposed (Annex E) and suggestions made by the participants for the coming period; some specific elements were pointed out with reference to certain activities and related outputs. The activities will be carried out upon budget availability. In particular, the Committee stressed the importance of the following activities:
 - Progress in the discussion on the harmonisation of closed season for fisheries operating in the Gulf of Gâbes and on the identification of case studies to test the feasibility of the implementation of the GFCM Guidelines on Fisheries Management Plans;
 - Organisation of the Study Groups on the joint processing of survey data for demersal and/or small pelagic fisheries resources;
 - Organisation of the annual meetings of the Working Groups on demersal and small pelagic fisheries resources;
 - Continued progress in the development of a bio-economic analysis of fisheries exploiting *Parapenaeus longirostris* and related species;

- Continued support for the implementation of joint surveys at sea, including the inter-calibration for acoustic vessels and protocols and the joint ichthyoplankton survey in western Libyan waters
- Promotion of the development of *ad hoc* and on-the-job training exercises;
- Support to the FAO GFCM its Scientific Advisory Committee and all Sub-Committees should be further given also in terms of scientific contributions.

Any other matters (Agenda item 5)

89. The Delegates and Meeting participants expressed their thanks to the Maltese authorities for having hosted the meeting. The Donors which provided the necessary support to ensure continuity to the activities of the Project were also thanked.
90. Upon the kind invitation of the Libyan delegation, the next Meeting of the MedSudMed Coordination Committee will be held in Libya. The date and venue will be proposed in due time by the Project. This proposal was welcomed by the Meeting participants.
91. The report was adopted on 24 April 2013.

List of Participants**ITALY**

Mauro Bertelletti
 General Directorate of Maritime
 Fisheries and Aquaculture, PEMAC VI
 Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies
 Viale dell'Arte, 16, 00144 Rome,
 Italy
 Tel.: +39 0659084050
 Fax: +39 0659084818
 Email: m.bertelletti@politicheagricole.gov.it

Angelo Bonanno
 IAMC – CNR
 Via del Mare, 3
 91021 Torretta-Granitola, Italy
 Tel.: +39 0924 40600
 Fax: +39 0924 40445
 Email: angelo.bonanno@iamc.cnr.it

Fabio Fiorentino
 IAMC – CNR
 Via L. Vaccara, 61
 91026 Mazara del Vallo, Italy
 Tel.: +39 0923 948966
 Fax: +39 0923 906634
 Email: fabio.fiorentino@iamc.cnr.it

LIBYA

Salem Wniss Zgozi
 Marine Biology Research Centre
 P.O. Box 30830, Tajura
 Tel: +218 21 3690001/3
 Fax: +218 21 3690002
 Email: salemzgozi@yahoo.com

MALTA

Nicholas Flores Martin
 Fisheries Control Directorate
 Ministry for Sustainable Development, the
 Environment and Climate change (MSDEC)
 Ghammieri, Ngiered Road, Marsa
 MRS 3303, Malta
 Tel: +356 22921251
 Fax: +356 22921221
 Email: nicholas.flores-martin@gov.mt

Reno Micallef
 Fisheries Control Directorate
 Ministry for Sustainable Development, the
 Environment and Climate change (MSDEC)
 Ghammieri, Ngiered Road, Marsa
 MRS 3303, Malta
 Tel: +356 22921222
 Fax: +356 22921221
 Email: reno.micallef@gov.mt

Roberta MifSud
 Fisheries Control Directorate
 Ministry for Sustainable Development, the
 Environment and Climate change (MSDEC)
 Ghammieri, Ngiered Road, Marsa
 MRS 3303, Malta
 Tel: +356 22921256
 Fax: +356 22921221
 Email: roberta.mifsud@gov.mt

TUNISIA

Othman Jarboui
 Institut National des Sciences et
 Technologies de la Mer
 BP 1035, 3018 Sfax, Tunisia
 Tel: +216 74 497117
 Fax: +216 74 497989
 Email: othman.jarboui@instm.rnrt.tn

FAO

Enrico Arneri
MedSudMed
FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Resources Use and
Conservation Division
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06 570 56092
Fax: +39 06 570 55188
Email: enrico.arneri@fao.org

Matthieu Bernardon
CopeMed II
FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Resources Use and
Conservation Division
c/o Subdelegación del Gobierno en Málaga: Paseo
de Sancha 64, Rooms 305-307,
29071 Málaga (Spain)
Tel: +34 695797666
Fax: +34 958989252
Email: Matthieu.Bernardon@fao.org

Luca Ceriola
MedSudMed
FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Resources Use and
Conservation Division
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06 570 54492
Fax: +39 06 570 55188
Email: luca.ceriola@fao.org

Paolo De Donno
FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Resources Use and
Conservation Division
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Roma,
Tel: +39 06 570 54827
Fax: +39 06 570 53020
Email: Paolo.DeDonno@fao.org

Nicoletta Milone
FAO AdriaMed
Fisheries and Aquaculture Resources Use and
Conservation Division
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06 570 55467
Fax: +39 06 570 55188
Email: nicoletta.milone@fao.org

Abdellah Srour
Executive Secretary
General Fisheries Commission for the
Mediterranean
FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Economics and
Policy Division
Palazzo Blumenstihl, Via Vittoria Colonna 1
00193 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06 570 54617
Fax: +39 06 57055730
Email: Abdellah.Srour@fao.org

Konstantina Riga
EastMed
FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Resources Use and
Conservation Division
c/o Andron 1
11257, Athens, Greece
Tel +30 210 8847960
FAX +30 210 8837600
E-mail: konstantina.riga@fao.org

Marcelo Vasconcellos
Fishery Consultant on data collection
General Fisheries Commission for the
Mediterranean
FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Economics and
Policy Division
Palazzo Blumenstihl, Via Vittoria Colonna 1
00193 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06 570 56631
Fax: +39 06 57055730
Email: marcelo.vasconcellos@fao.org

Annotated Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting and election of the Chairperson

2. Adoption of the Agenda

3. Report on the Project's progress

The main activities and the Project's outputs will be presented and reviewed. Information will be given on the activities of the MedSudMed Working Groups, the on-going cooperative research work, the training sessions, and the relationship and cooperation of the Project at Mediterranean level. The outcomes of the FAO independent evaluation, carried out in 2012 on the Project operate will be briefly illustrated.

4. FAO GFCM work plan for the next intersession period

The scientific and technical activities foreseen in the FAO GFCM work plan for 2013 will be presented. Discussion on how the activities foreseen by the Project are integrated and will contribute to the First GFCM Framework Programme (2013-2018) will be held.

5. Development of the Project's Programme for the next period

The work plan of the Project will be outlined and discussed. Topics to be dealt with are those pertaining to the ongoing research programmes, the training activities and the joint activities directed toward the national capacity development and the preparatory work towards joint fishery management decisions in the project area. Particular attention will be given to the follow-up of the MedSudMed Working Groups and to the medium-term project work plan. The international cooperation, the relationship with other projects, the relationship with the Donors, with the FAO GFCM and other topics brought forth by the Committee will be discussed. The Committee will be asked to provide the Project with an appraisal and orientation of the programme presented and/or any other contribution.

6. Other matters

7. Date and venue of the next Coordination Committee meeting

List of Documents

FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/01	Provisional annotated agenda
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/02	Report on Project's Progress (March 2012 – February 2013)
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/03	- Development of the Project's Programme - Medium and long term work plan for the Project activities
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/04	MedSudMed Project – FAO independent Evaluation Final report
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info01	Provisional list of participants
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info02	Report of the Tenth Meeting of the Coordination Committee. <i>MedSudMed Technical Documents N.29</i>
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info03	MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources in the south-central Mediterranean Sea (Sliema, Malta, 10-14 September 2012) – Meeting memorandum
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info04	Stock Assessment Forms on Demersal Fisheries Resources, namely <i>Parapenaeus longirostris</i> . Data presented at the GFCM-SAC – Working Group on Stock Assessment on Demersal Species (Croatia, 05-09 November 2012)
FAO-MedSudMed: CC10/Info05	Stock Assessment Forms on Demersal Fisheries Resources, namely <i>Merluccius merluccius</i> . Data presented at the GFCM-SAC - Working Group on Stock Assessment on Demersal Species (Croatia, 05-09 November 2012)
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info06	MedSudMed Study Group on joint processing of survey data (Salammbô, Tunisia, 03-06 July 2012) – Meeting memorandum
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info07	MedSudMed and CopeMed II Workshop on Fisheries and appraisal of <i>Palinurus elephas</i> in the Project areas (Palermo, Italy 05-06 July 2011) – Meeting memorandum
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info08	Harmonisation of closed seasons and biological reposes for shared stock fisheries in the Gulf of Gabès: a technical proposal.
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info09	MedSudMed Working Group on Small Pelagic Fishery Resources in the south-central Mediterranean Sea (FAO HQs, Rome, Italy 31 January – 01 February 2013) – Meeting memorandum
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info10	MedSudMed Technical meeting for planning the acoustic inter-ship comparison – Meeting memorandum

FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info11	Report of the MedSudMed-06 Oceanographic Survey, Libyan continental shelf (south-central Mediterranean Sea) 12 – 24 August 2006. GCP/RER/010/ITA/MSM-TD-27. <i>MedSudMed Technical Documents</i> . No 27: 53 pp.
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info12	Stock status and potential yield of deep water rose shrimp (<i>Parapenaeus longirostris</i> , Lucas 1846) in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. GCP/RER/010/ITA/MSM-TD-28. <i>MedSudMed Technical Documents</i> . No 28: 15 pp.
FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info13	Synthesis of information on some demersal crustaceans relevant for fisheries target species in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. GCP/RER/010/ITA/MSM-TD-32. <i>MedSudMed Technical Documents</i> . No 32- Preliminary draft.
FAO-MedSudMed: CC10/Info14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Major activities of the FAO Regional Projects. Documents presented at the FAO GFCM 36th Annual Session (Marrakech, Morocco, 14 - 19 May 2012) - Major activities of the FAO Regional Projects. Documents presented at the FAO GFCM-SAC 15th session (FAO HQs Rome, Italy, 08-11 April 2013)
FAO-MedSudMed: CC10/Info15	List of Documents

Report on the Project's Progress (March 2012 – March 2013)

Introduction

This paper provides an overview of the main activities carried out by the Project MedSudMed between March 2012 and March 2013, including meetings, training, research activities and technical assistance provided to the participating countries, as well as the cooperation established with the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (FAO GFCM), its Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and Sub-Committees and other relevant institutions. The activities reported were carried out using the funds provided to FAO by the Italian Government and by the Regione Siciliana (Italy). During the reporting period co-funding from the European Commission (EC) Directorate for (DG-MARE) was also received. The work programme and recommendations of the 10th meeting of the MedSudMed Coordination Committee (Djerba, Tunisia, 13-14 March 2012; CC/11/info 02) were implemented.

Moreover, according to the ruling procedures of FAO, due to its total budget and the life span, the Project was subject to an FAO independent evaluation as foreseen in the Project Document. The FAO Office of Evaluation, the Fisheries department and Project management agreed that the evaluation be held in the first half of 2012. An FAO Independent Evaluation Team was selected and initiated the evaluation in March 2012. The evaluation assessed the work carried out through the Project and provided accountability to the participating member countries, to resource partners including the Italian MiPAAF, the Regione Siciliana and FAO on the extent of Projects' results, including outputs, outcome and impact – actual and potential – to date. Lessons learnt were defined and recommendations were formulated for the potential future role and strategies of the Project, with the aim of enabling all key stakeholders to take decisions regarding the utilization of Project results, as well as on the design and implementation of similar projects in the future. Relevance of and perspectives for Project continuation were also assessed (CC/11/info 04).

The activities carried out during the inter-committee period comply with the methodological framework of the Project and its mandate for the current phase. To some extent, the work plan in the intersessional period was affected by the political situation which occurred in the region, sometimes resulting in changes to the schedule and calendar of activities. This report details the main outputs of the Project activities and the results achieved with direct reference to the following Project Objectives:

- 1) Support the scientific standardization of the methodologies applied in the relevant studies related to fishery resources and to the relationships between fishery resources and biotic and abiotic factors;
- 2) Improve the scientific knowledge on fishery resources and their ecosystem in the Project area through the finalization of the research activities program;
- 3) Strengthen the national expertise through on-the-job training and working groups, and support the national research institutions in enhancing scientific expertise;

- 4) Strengthen and support scientific cooperation between the different experts and institutions involved in the Project activities;
- 5) Strengthen the technical and scientific cooperation at Mediterranean level, among the participating countries and between the Project, the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (FAO GFCM) and other FAO Regional Projects.

The activities presented are grouped according to four main components, as follows, which may cover one or more of the Project Objectives:

1. Cooperative research programmes and working groups;
2. National capacity building;
3. Regional cooperation;
4. Project communication.

1. Cooperative research programmes and Working Groups

In 2012 the Project implemented a series of activities dealing with field work and data processing methodology. On the basis of standardised protocols previously agreed on by participating institutions, field work and on-the-job training exercises were implemented for each component of the Project.

Following the indication of the 10th MedSudMed Coordination Committee and in agreement with some of the conclusions of the FAO independent evaluation of the Project, in close cooperation with the research institutes MedSudMed initiated discussion on a work plan for the medium and long term activities of the project. With this aim, discussions with national experts were held during the MedSudMed Working Groups and *ad hoc* workshop. A tentative work plan was drafted as a result (CC/11/03).

1.1. MedSudMed Component on Demersal Resources

During the inter-committee period, the work carried out within this Project component focused on planning field work, promoting discussion on emerging issues and priorities on fisheries between national experts, joint data analysis, finalisation of technical reports and technical documents.

Study Group on the Joint Processing of Survey Data

Considerable effort was made by the Project and the research institutes in the south-central Mediterranean Sea to progress toward the standardisation of sampling designs and protocols used in the different survey programmes and data processing. In this context, as follow up of the MedSudMed inter-calibration exercise at sea for bottom trawl surveys (July 2011), the Project organised a Study Group on the Joint Processing of Survey Data (03-06 July 2012, Salammbô, Tunisia). The Study Group was attended by experts from all the research institutions participating in the Project, namely the INSTM of Sfax and La Goulette (Tunisia), the Malta Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs (MRRA, Malta), the Marine Biology Research Centre of Tajura (MBRC, Libya) and the Istituto per l'Ambiente Marino Costiero-Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche of Mazara del Vallo (IAMC-CNR, Italy). During the meeting national experts: i) completed the processing of the data collected during the MedSudMed inter-calibration exercise at sea and estimated inter-calibration factors for

Parapenaeus longirostris and *Merluccius merluccius*; ii) identified the best approach to standardise the survey data, for the years 2003 and 2008; iii) initiated a joint exercise to obtain abundance (biomass and density) indices per km² and length frequency structures for some species for each survey; iv) produced preliminary maps of nurseries and spawning grounds of *Merluccius merluccius* in the Project area; and v) provided a rough description of the state of the stock of *M. merluccius* using direct (fishery independent) methods.

Ad hoc meeting on trawl surveys protocols

In the interests of enhancing the scientific networking and promoting the harmonising of protocols for experimental surveys at sea, MedSudMed organised an *ad hoc* meeting in Palermo between the Libyan and Italian National Focal Points, also involving experts from the IAMC-CNR (Italy, 3rd February 2013). During the meeting discussion was held on protocol currently adopted in the GSA 16 for the experimental bottom trawl surveys, i.e. the MEDITS (international bottom trawl survey in the Mediterranean) protocol. The basic specifications and requirements related to the application of the MEDITS sampling scheme were discussed. The project, in cooperation with the FAO Fisheries Resources Use and Conservation Service (FIRF) also provided technical support to the initial steps for the allocation and mapping sampling stations according to the bathymetric stratification foreseen in the MEDITS protocol.

Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources (WG-DEM)

The Project organised the annual meeting of the MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources (WG-DEM). The meeting was held on 10-14 September 2012 in Sliema, Malta, kindly hosted by the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs (Malta). The WG-DEM was attended by 12 researchers from all the research institutes involved in the Project. The WG-DEM focused on the appraisal of the state of selected demersal shared stocks and fisheries in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. Discussion was also held on the tools available for a bio-economic analysis of fisheries in the south-central Mediterranean Sea and on the identification of a case study to be developed with the support of the Project. According to the recommendation of the 10th MedSudMed Coordination Committee, the WG-DEM was also called to discuss and define a medium-long term work plan for possible joint activities to be carried out in the framework of the Project (CC/11/info 03). Regarding the bio-economic analysis, the WG-DEM agreed to initiate a case study using both bio-economic models and empirical indicators on the fisheries targeting *P. longirostris*. The stock assessment completed on *Parapenaeus longirostris* and *Merluccius merluccius* were presented and discussed during the GFCM-SAC Working Group on Stock Assessment of Demersal Species (Split, Croatia, 5-9 November 2012) (CC/11/info 04 and CC/11/info 05).

Activities on shared stocks: Octopus vulgaris

MedSudMed continued to support the identification of shared stocks of *Octopus vulgaris* in the south central-Mediterranean. During the intersessional period the genetic comparison of *O. vulgaris* samples collected in the entire Project area was carried out. Collaboration with the University of Oviedo (Spain) was established and all the samples collected were processed. One expert from the INSTM of La Goulette was involved in this activity. The analysis of the results for the discrimination of population units was also initiated.

Ad hoc meeting on closed seasons for fisheries

An *ad hoc* meeting on closed seasons for fisheries currently occurring at national level in the south-central and western Mediterranean was organised by the Project (Tunisia, 14-15 February 2012). The objective of the meeting was to discuss the case study of the Gulf of Gabès with a view to the future harmonization of closed seasons for fisheries in the MedSudMed Project area. During the intersession period, the Project supported the preparation of a proposal document including: an overview of: i) the existing information on the bottom trawl fisheries operating in the Gulf of Gabès; ii) an overview of the state of the stock of the main fisheries target species in the area as estimated by national research institutions; iii) an outline of the national strategies adopted to manage such fisheries; iv) a technical proposal for the harmonisation of the closed season for trawl fisheries operating in the Gulf of Gabès, currently in place at national level (CC/11/info 08).

Review on demersal crustacean species

Given the importance of demersal crustaceans for the fisheries in the south-central Mediterranean Sea, the Project supported the preparation of a review on some demersal crustacean species. The species were defined according to the list of MedSudMed priority species and taking into account the importance for fisheries in terms of economic value and total commercial catch. The structure of the MedSudMed Technical Document 15 “Synthesis of information on some target species in the MedSudMed Project area (central Mediterranean)” was used as a template for the document. A preliminary compilation of information on the biology and fishery of Spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*), and of shallow and deep water shrimps (*Metapenaeus monoceros*, *Aristaeomorpha foliacea* and *Parapenaeus longirostris*) was prepared (CC/11/info 13).

Workshop on fisheries and appraisal of Palinurus elephas

The Project organised a Workshop on fisheries and appraisal of *Palinurus elephas* (04-05 December 2012, Palermo, Italy) in collaboration with CopeMed II. The Workshop (WS) was attended by experts coming from Libya, Malta, Spain, Tunisia and Italy. The main objectives of the meeting were: i) to define the current state of national activities carried out and/or currently implemented on *P. elephas*; ii) to explore the existing data on this species in the south-central and western Mediterranean; and iii) to identify gaps and possible scientific activities to progress with the proper description of the stock, fisheries and management regimes for *P. elephas* in the Projects’ area. To achieve these objectives, during the meeting national experts presented research and monitoring activities on *P. elephas* performed in recent years. The data and/or information currently available in each country on biology and fisheries of *P. elephas* were presented as well. Gaps and possible scientific activities to progress on the proper description of the stock, fisheries and management regimes for *P. elephas* in the Projects’ area were discussed and agreed on. The conclusions of the meeting will be part of the background for the identification of possible harmonised strategies for *P. elephas* fisheries management in the central and western Mediterranean Sea (CC/11/info 07).

1.2. MedSudMed Component on Small Pelagic fish

As for the previous years and following the requests formulated during the 10th MedSudMed Coordination Committee (March 2012), efforts were made by the Project in pursuing the improvement of expertise on small pelagic fisheries resources and harmonising methodologies for data collection at sea, as well as in monitoring areas not regularly covered by national surveys targeting on small pelagic fishery resources.

Working Group on Small Pelagic Fishery Resources

In the inter-committee period, particular importance was given to enlarging and consolidating the group of researchers involved in studies on small pelagic fish. In this framework, the annual MedSudMed Working Group on Small Pelagic Fishery Resources (WG-SP) was organised in Palermo, Italy, on 31st January-1st February 2013. The objective of the meeting was to review and discuss the results of the joint activities carried out on small pelagic fish in the participating countries and on current knowledge on fisheries targeting them. The WG was also called to preliminarily identify the activities to be included in the medium- and long-term work plan for the MedSudMed Project. During the WG: i) the ongoing national and international programmes on small pelagic stocks were outlined; ii) the technical details of the MedSudMed inter-calibration exercise at sea for acoustic surveys and data processing were discussed; and iii) a tentative plan for the implementation of joint oceanographic and ichthyoplankton surveys at sea was agreed on. As for the WG-DEM, progress was made during the WG-SP toward the definition of a medium- and long-term work plan for MedSudMed cooperative activities on small pelagic fish. During the meeting consideration was also given to the issues raised by the GFCM-SAC related to small pelagic fishery stocks and those actions/activities which may contribute to SAC tasks (CC/11/info 09).

Joint processing of survey data

During Summer 2010, in collaboration of the IAMC-CNR of Capo Granitola (Italy) and the MBRC of Tajura (Libya), the Project organised acoustic and oceanographic-ichthyoplankton surveys in Libyan waters to continue the investigation on the abundance and distribution of small pelagic fisheries resources in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. In the reporting period, the Project supported the joint processing of the ichthyoplankton samples and acoustic data collected during the 2010 MedSudMed surveys. Overall, mixed international teams of experts from the Istituto Ambiente Marino Costiero of Mazara del Vallo (IAMC-CNR, Italy), the Marine Biology Research Centre of Tajura (MBRC, Libya) and the Russian Federal Research Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography (VNIRO, Russia) participated in the activities which were carried out according to the following timetable:

- The ichthyoplankton sample processing was held from 7th to 16th May 2012 at the IAMC-CNR of Capo Granitola (Italy). A description of the oceanographic characteristics of the area covered by the survey and the composition and spatial distribution of the ichthyoplankton was produced, hence complementing information on transport patterns of eggs and larvae of commercial fish species in the Project area.

- The processing and elaboration of the acoustic data was held in three sessions at the IAMC-CNR of Capo Granitola (i.e. May 2012 and February 2013) and at the MBRC by the Libyan staff (i.e. February-March 2013). The exercise produced estimates of the biomass of some small pelagic fishes in the area covered by the survey.

Ad hoc meeting on inter-calibration exercise at sea on acoustic survey

The Project continued to support the standardisation of surveys procedures in the south-central Mediterranean. An *ad hoc* meeting was organised by the Project from 31st May – 1st June 2012 in La Goulette, Tunisia. During the meeting the sampling scheme and the work plan for an inter-calibration exercise at sea on acoustic survey for small pelagic fish between the Tunisian (R/V Hannibal) and Italian (R/V Dallaporta) vessels was established. Experts from Italy (IAMC-CNR Capo Granitola) and Tunisia (INSTM of LA Goulette), involved in acoustic surveys for the investigation of distribution and abundance of small pelagic fisheries resources, participated in the meeting (CC/11/info 10).

Activities on shared stocks: Coryphaena hippurus

The discrimination among stock units of *Coryphaena hippurus* in the Mediterranean region and the identification of possible connections between them are probably two of the main factors to be considered in the management of the fisheries exploiting this species. However, information on this aspect is still poor, as clearly emerged during the MedSudMed and CopeMed II workshop on fisheries and appraisal of *C. hippurus* in the south-central and western Mediterranean Sea (Italy, July 2011). In order to contribute to eliminating this limit, the Project, in collaboration with AdriaMed, CopeMed II and EastMed, coordinated the collection of samples of *C. hippurus* in the entire Mediterranean region for genetic analysis. The first part of the analysis (extraction and amplification of DNA) was completed at the University of Palermo in March and April 2013. This activity is conducted in synergy with the RITMARE project launched by the Italian National Research Council (CNR). The occasion provided by this activity was taken to organise an on-the-job training exercise for experts of the INSTM of Monastir (Tunisia) and the MBRC of Tajura (Libya).

2. National Capacity building and training

During the intersessional period, considerable effort was dedicated to the organisation of training courses, mainly following specific requests of the participating institutes. The courses were an occasion to strengthen scientific collaboration and to exchange competencies between institutes, as they involved scientists belonging to the network that was created and consolidated by the Project. Some of the training courses allowed for joint processing of survey data and aimed not only at enhancing capacity development but also at producing scientific information directly related to the Project activities. Moreover, MedSudMed in cooperation with the other FAO Projects in the Mediterranean, is seeking synergies on common training activities to broaden the perspective of the actions planned and provide wider group of young Mediterranean experts with the possibility to develop harmonised skills and discuss on issues of common interest.

In this context the following training activities have been carried out and/or supported:

- On-the-job trainings on ichthyoplankton and acoustic data processing at the IAMC–CNR Capo Granitola, May-June 2012 and February 2013;
- *Ad hoc* training on the macroscopic and histological methods used to determinate the sexual maturity stages in *Merluccius merluccius* at IAMC-CNR of Capo Granitola, Italy, 15 May -15 June 2012;
- On-the-job training on the methods used for the comparison of the genetic structure of *Octopus vulgaris* tissues using microsatellites at the University of Oviedo, Spain, 25-29 June 2012;
- *Ad hoc* training on the methods used to estimate age of *Octopus vulgaris* by stilet analysis at the Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas (IIM), Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) of Vigo, Spain, 01-31 July 2012;
- Training on the use of ATrIS including installation, configuration for data entry, data entry, handling and reporting, Malta 10-14 September 2012;
- GFCM Training workshop on age reading of elasmobranchs in the GFCM area, 8-12 October 2012 Antalya, Turkey;
- •GFCM/CopeMedII Workshop on Mediterranean gears, fishing technology and selectivity, 26-30 November 2012 Tangier, Morocco;
- CopeMed II training course on basic population Dynamic and stock assessment, Tunis, Tunisia, 10-14 December 2012;
- On-the-job training on the methods used for the extraction and amplification of genomic DNA for the comparison of the genetic structure of *Coryphena hippurus* at the University of Palermo (Italy) for experts of the INSTM of Monastir, Tunisia (18-23 March 2013) and MBRC of Tajura, Libya (08-12 April 2013).

3. Regional cooperation

As indicated in the last meetings of the Coordination Committee and also by the FAO Independent Evaluation, the Project strengthened the liaison with the Donors (MiPAAF, Regione Siciliana and EU-DG-MARE) and intensified the coordination meetings with them. In the intersessional period, several coordination meetings were held at the MiPAAF headquarters. Meetings was held with the Regione Siciliana in June and September 2012. A meeting was held with MiPAAF with representatives of EU-DGMARE, all the FAO Regional Mediterranean Projects (AdriaMed, MedSudMed, EastMed and CopeMed II) and all the Donors (Italy, Spain and Greece) in Brussels, Belgium, 25 June 2012. A coordination meeting with FAO FIRF and EU-DG MARE was organized in FAO-HQ Rome, Italy 10-11 January 2013.

The reinforcement of regional cooperation was encouraged by the Project through participation of regional experts in several workshops, trainings, meetings, seminars and conferences organised in the Mediterranean area. Relations were constantly maintained with the researchers and the institutes of the MedSudMed area for the discussion of the Project's activities, planning and organization of the working groups and comments on the publications produced. Several informal meetings with national experts and focal points were also held through the year to preliminarily discuss technical issues and plan possible activities.

In order to strengthen international and regional cooperation the Project interacts closely with the FAO Regional Projects AdriaMed, CopeMed II, EastMed, and Med-Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (MedSea-LME) Project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). In particular, the Project interacted closely with the FAO Regional Project AdriaMed “Scientific Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea”, with support provided on administrative matters and some technical issues. The Project also participated in the 13th and 14th AdriaMed Coordination Committee meeting (March, 2012 and March 2013 respectively); ii) AdriaMed Working Group on small pelagics (Italy, September 2011); iii) Study Group for the application of bottom-trawl survey data to fish stock assessment in South Adriatic Sea (GSA 18) Italy, September 2012) iv) AdriaMed Working Group on Demersals (Italy, September 2012).

Strong cooperation was also established with the FAO Project CopeMed II to optimise the use of human and financial resources. In this framework, the Workshop on *Palinurus elephas* was co-organized by the two Projects.

In addition, several coordination meetings were also held with the other FAO Regional Projects AdriaMed, CopeMed II and EastMed throughout the year to consolidate and develop common activities. Furthermore, the Project participated in the Coordination Committee meetings of CopeMed II (May 2012 and March 2013) and EastMed (April 2012 and April 2013 respectively), where additional synergies were identified.

The cooperation with the Project MedSea-LME was also strengthened on topics of common interest. In particular, the Project staff participated in the discussion meetings held in Tunisia on July and December 2012 to present results of the first phase of activities of the Project MedSea-LME, and to contribute planning future activities (second phase).

In the framework of FAO decentralisation, MedSudMed is reinforcing collaboration with the subregional (SNE) and regional (RNE) FAO offices in the north African countries by liaising periodically, by supporting joint initiatives on fisheries and sharing information on the activities and results of the Project. Strong cooperation with FAO SNG Office (Sub-regional Office for Gulf Cooperation Council and Yemen) was also sought on issues related to the development of national capacity and stock assessment in the GCC countries and Yemen. In particular, the Project staff was actively involved in the finalisation, definition and final approval of the work plan of the project TCP\SNG\3402 “Support to capacity development for fishery stock assessment in GCC countries and Yemen”.

Cooperation was further sustained with the FAO GFCM Secretariat and the FAO GFCM Subsidiary bodies. Several informal meetings of coordination were held with the FAO GFCM staff back to back to FAO GFCM events, in order to strengthen the cooperation and to find synergies.

- Coordination meeting between GFCM and FAO Mediterranean Regional Projects (Rome, 21 September 2012) to discuss the contribution of the Project in the GFCM Framework Programme (2013-2018);
- Implementation of the GFCM First Strategic Framework Programme (2013-2018) – preparatory meeting (Rome, 6-7 December 2012);

- GFCM SAC-SCMEE First meeting of the Concerted Action for Lebanon - Rome, Italy 3-4 December 2012;
- GFCM Sub-Regional meeting on Data Collection for Western, Central and Eastern Mediterranean (Frascati, 25-27 March 2013).

MedSudMed continued to support the activities of the FAO GFCM by providing scientific contributions for discussion and by participating and funding the participation of experts in the FAO GFCM meetings held in the intersessional period (CC/11/info 14). Due to the overlap in geographical areas covered by MedSudMed and CopeMed II, the two Projects agreed to coordinate the support to the participation of national scientists in the following meetings organised by the FAO GFCM:

- Final meeting for the validation of the outcomes emerged in the framework of the Task Force Marrakech, Morocco 11-12 May 2012;
- General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean - 36th Session Marrakech, Morocco 14-19 May 2012;
- Training workshop on age reading of elasmobranchs in the GFCM area - Antalya, Turkey 8-12 October 2012;
- SCSA Working Group on Demersal Species - Split, Croatia 5-9 November 2012;
- GFCM/CopeMed II Workshop on Mediterranean gears, fishing technology and selectivity - Tangier, Morocco 26-30 November 2012;
- GFCM SAC-SCMEE First meeting of the Concerted Action for Lebanon - Rome, Italy 3-4 December 2012;
- GFCM SAC Sub-Committees FAO HQs, Rome, Italy 18-20 February 2013;
- GFCM – 15th session Scientific Advisory Committee (Rome, Italy 08-11 April 2013).

4. Project Communication

4.1. Web site (<http://www.faomedsudmed.org>)

Since its publication, the Project's website has been continually updated. A general description of the MedSudMed Project is available, as well as information on the recent or forthcoming events organized by the Project, links to the Research Institutes participating in the Project, the Mediterranean Regional Projects or to sites regarding GIS, databanks and Research Bodies. The specific section describing the main activities carried out in the framework of the Project is under renewal. In this context the Project continued the adaptation of its web pages into Italian and Arabic.

The list of Technical Documents available on the Project web site has been updated and more than 15 MedSudMed Technical Documents are now available as .pdf files. Over the last year, an average of 6500 pages was visited each month and around 180 documents are downloaded from the site each month.

A joint leaflet describing the objectives of the FAO Mediterranean Projects, including AdriaMed, CopeMed II and EastMed, was prepared and distributed in occasion of the 30th

session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI, Rome Italy 9-13 July 2012) and other international meetings.

4.2. Technical Documents

Three technical documents related to meetings and specific research activities promoted by the Project were finalised and published on the web site. The MedSudMed Publications are issued as series of Technical Documents (GCP/RER/010/ITA/MSM-TD-00) related to meetings and research organised or conducted within the framework of the Project. The MedSudMed Technical Documents are included in the ASFA database.

The most recent Project publications are also disseminated through the Project's mailing list. The following technical documents were finalised during the intersessional period:

- Stock status and potential yield of deep water rose shrimp (*Parapenaeus longirostris*, Lucas 1846) in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. GCP/RER/010/ITA/MSM-TD-28. *MedSudMed Technical Documents*. No 28: 15 pp.
- Report of the MedSudMed-06 Oceanographic Survey, Libyan continental shelf (south-central Mediterranean Sea) 12 – 24 August 2006. GCP/RER/010/ITA/MSM-TD. *MedSudMed Technical Documents*, 27: 53 pp.
- MedSudMed. 2012. Report of the Tenth Meeting of the Coordination Committee. FAO-MiPAAF Assessment and Monitoring of the Fisheries Resources and Ecosystems in the Straits of Sicily. GCP/RER/010/ITA/MSM-TD-29. *MedSudMed Technical Documents*, No 29: 35 pp.

Development of the Project's Programme

Introduction

The aim of this document is to provide the Coordination Committee (CC) members with elements for discussion on the MedSudMed Project Work Programme for the coming year.

The MedSudMed Project has been operative since April 2001 with an initial mandate of 5 years (MedSudMed I phase). During the 5th MedSudMed Coordination Committee meeting (2006), the Committee reviewed the conclusions and recommendations made by the Project Mid-term Review and recommended a four-year extension period from 2006 to 2010 (MedSudMed II phase). Following a technical review conducted in 2009, the Italian Donor, the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Forestry Policies (MiPAAF), confirmed the extension of its financial support to the Project activities until December 2012. Additional funds were also provided to MedSudMed in 2011 by the Regione Siciliana (Italy) to carry out specific actions on crustaceans. Since 2012 the Project has been co-funded by the Directorate General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs of the European Commission (DG Mare).

The activities proposed in this document take into account the objectives and results achieved so far and the recommendations received during the 10th Coordination Committee meeting (March 2012, Djerba, Tunisia). The indications collected from the countries during a series of informal meetings held with the National Focal Points throughout the intersession period are considered.

In addition, some of the activities take into account the indications provided by the FAO External Evaluation of the Project carried out in March-June 2012 by an independent FAO team.

All the activities planned are integrated and will contribute to the development of the newly established GFCM Framework Programme (2013-2018), and in particular to the Work Programmes 1, 2, 3 and 4.

The final work plan will take into due account the recommendations of the 11th Coordination Committee meeting, in accordance with the priorities expressed by the countries on each activity and directly linked to the Project's budget availability.

WORK PLAN

For the coming period the Project, in collaboration with the participating institutions, will focus its attention on research activities in support of fisheries management, the filling of scientific gaps on fisheries, fisheries resources and the ecosystem, the finalisation of pending publications and the training component.

In order to facilitate the presentation of the work plan for the next 12 months, all the activities are organized into five main themes:

- a. Demersal fisheries resources;
- b. Small pelagic fisheries resources;
- c. Training and national capacity development;
- d. Web site;
- e. Regional cooperation.

Moreover, efforts have been made in coordination with the participating countries, all the FAO Regional Projects operating in the Mediterranean and the GFCM, to draft a tentative common calendar of activities, in order to avoid any overlap, to find synergies and strengthen the coordination among the activities carried out.

Some of the activities included in this work plan overlap with those of the previous programme of work, as they were initiated during the intersessional period and are currently in progress.

a) Demersal fisheries resources

- Fishery dependent and independent data gathering

The Project will provide technical support to the participating research institutions to plan and put in place the collection of fishery related data. On the basis of the conclusions of the MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources and of the meetings held during the year, the harmonisation of calendar for trawl surveys in the Project area will be pursued. Technical support to the organisation of activities that aim to monitor natural resources and fisheries in Libya will also be provided. Details and technical support for the conduction of biological sampling will be provided in the forthcoming period as requested.

- MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources

The Project foresees the organisation of the annual MedSudMed Working Group on demersal fisheries resources. The meeting will be tentatively organised in September 2013. The objectives of the meeting will be: i) identify and plan common or joint research priorities and activities; ii) review the current knowledge on fisheries and the marine environment in the Project area; and iii) discuss the results and/or carry out the evaluation of the state of selected fisheries resources. Joint analysis of data is foreseen to take place thus creating an additional opportunity for cooperative analysis and joint assessment of the common and shared stocks in the Project area. In particular, the Project will continue to support the appraisal already initiated on *Parapenaeus longirostris* and on *Merluccius merluccius* and promote the beginning of stock assessment on other species like *Mullus spp.*. Technical discussion will also be supported on the fisheries of *Aristeomorpha foliacea*. Discussion on *ad hoc* activity on selected species like Spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*) could be foreseen to explore the possibility of a common study on this species. Synergy with the FAO Project CopeMed II will be sought in this respect.

- Joint processing of survey data

The Project will continue to support the MedSudMed Study Group for the joint processing of survey data. The objectives of the Study Group meeting, the first meeting of which was held on Tunisia on July 2012 will be to: i) progress in the standardisation and joint analysis of historical trawl survey data; ii) progress in the identification of nurseries and spawning grounds for fisheries target species starting from *M. merluccius* and *P. longirostris* iii) discuss and agree on the contents of a MedSudMed Technical Document describing the inter-calibration exercise carried out in 2011. During the meeting, possible options to further improve and facilitate the sharing and circulation of fishery data and of packages for data analysis will be also discussed. The activity is tentatively planned in May-June 2013. However, the possibility to carry out the meeting back to back with the Working Group on Demersal Species will be considered.

- Progress on the identification of shared stocks

The Project will produce a Technical Document describing the results of the multi-disciplinary study conducted on *Octopus vulgaris* stocks and fisheries in the south-central Mediterranean. The socio-economic aspects of the Tunisian *O. vulgaris* fisheries operating in the Gulf of Gabès will be included in the document. The structure of the stock/s of *O. vulgaris* in the south-central Mediterranean Sea will be provided, taking advantage of the genetic comparison carried out on *Octopus vulgaris* samples collected in the entire Project area.

- Cooperative activities on crustacean stocks in the south-central Mediterranean

Available information on demersal crustaceans relevant for fisheries in the Project area are being reviewed and summarised in a specific MedSudMed Technical Document. In particular, information on *Aristaeomorpha foliacea*, *Nephrops norvegicus*, *Palinurus elephas*, *Metapenaeus monoceros*, *Parapenaeus longirostris*, and *Melicertus kerathurus* will be provided in the document, including stock assessment information and maps of nurseries (when available). The structure and contents of document will be presented by national experts during the MedSudMed Working Group on demersals. Technical discussion and specific activities on the characterisation of *Palinurus elephas* fisheries will also be foreseen in collaboration with CopeMed II.

- Closed season for fisheries in the Gulf of Gabès

The Project will continue to provide, at the request of the country concerned, assistance in the harmonization of existing fisheries management schemes at sub-regional levels, including related regulatory measures and, when required, test their effectiveness. The development of this activity follows the principles expressed in the FAO Code of Conduct or Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and the indications provided so far to the Project on the need to tackle fisheries management issues as also indicated by the latest FAO External Project Evaluation. In this context, the Project will continue to support and technically contribute to the harmonisation of management strategies for fisheries operating in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. The document outlining the background for a technical proposal for the harmonisation of temporary closures of bottom trawl fisheries operating in the Gulf of Gabès (GSAs 13 and 14) was finalised. In addition, the Project foresees the organisation of an *ad hoc* meeting with the involvement of both scientific community and administrations of participating countries to discuss options for the harmonisation of management approaches. The Project will act as the facilitator promoting the discussion on the definition and the harmonization of management plans regarding fisheries sharing resources in the south-central Mediterranean. Synergies will be sought with the GFCM within its Framework Programme (2013-2018), which will be the final forum for

the discussion and adoption of any international management plan, to optimise resources and avoiding overlapping and duplications.

- Bio-economic analysis (modelling and multiple indicators) of fisheries

The Project will support the development of a case study for the bio-economic analysis of the demersal fisheries targeting deep water crustaceans. According to the conclusions of MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources, the Project will: i) promote the inventory of national data existing on socio-economic aspects of fisheries in the participating countries; ii) coordinate the exchange of information and sharing of data to build up a common platform for joint discussion; and iii) will provide technical support for the development of the case study. The organisation of an *ad hoc* meeting could also be foreseen to facilitate the discussion and initiate a joint exercise.

b) Small pelagic fisheries resources

- Cooperative processing of acoustic and ichthyoplankton data

The Project, in cooperation with the participating institutes, will continue supporting the joint processing of samples and data collected during the MedSudMed cooperative surveys at sea. Progress will be made in the finalisation of the reports of surveys carried out in 2008 and 2010 in Libyan waters. To this end, the sharing of information and data will be supported, as well as technical discussion on the contents and structure of the survey report. A synthesis of existing data and information on ichthyoplankton will be carried out and the possibility of mapping the concentration and retention areas at sub-regional level will be explored. Likewise, possibly a description of the main oceanographic features of the area surveyed will be produced.

- Inter-calibration of acoustic surveys and data interpretation

The Project will continue to pursue the standardization of data collection and processing in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. Great attention has been given by MedSudMed to specific actions on small pelagic fisheries resources and to the standardisation of research activities for this group of species with particular focus on surveys at sea and survey data processing. As follow up to the discussion held during the Working Groups on small pelagic fisheries resources (Italy, January 2012 and January 2013), an inter-calibration exercise at sea for acoustic surveys between the Tunisian R/V Hannibal and the Italian R/V Dallaporta is being organised. In this context, the sampling period (June-July), the sampling area (GSA 12 or 13) and the protocol to be followed in the work at sea were identified and agreed on by national experts (CC/11/Info 10). Wherever possible, calendars of surveys at sea carried out by the different participating institutes will be coordinated to optimise the resources available. MedSudMed will also support the joint analysis of survey data. This latter activity could be carried out back-to-back with the MedSudMed Working Group on small pelagic fisheries resources.

- Joint surveys at sea

According to the conclusions of the discussion held during the WG, the Project will continue to support the planning and execution of surveys at sea to be carried out in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. Particular attention will be devoted to areas that are not regularly monitored. Experts from all the participating countries will be involved in the preparatory phase of a preliminary calendar of surveys at sea that would lead to coverage of the widest possible part of the MedSudMed area by taking advantage of the national and international surveys regularly carried out.

- Identification of shared stocks

The Project will continue to support the activities finalised to the identification of possible connections among stocks of pelagic fish in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. As follow up of the discussion held during the MedSudMed Working Group on Small Pelagic Fisheries Resources (Palermo, Italy, January 2013 – CC/11/Info 09) and the workshop on *Coryphaena hippurus* (Italy, July 2011) the need to define the occurrence of possible stock sub units of selected species in the Project area was pointed out. Emphasis was given to the possibility to combine various methods to discriminate population and stocks units, e.g. studies on fish morphometry, genetics, otolith microchemistry and amino acid content. *Ad hoc* activities were initiated for the genetic comparison of samples of *C. hippurus* coming from the entire Mediterranean Sea in collaboration with the Project's participating institutes, the Italian funded CNR Project RITMARE and the University of Palermo (Italy). The Project will further coordinate information flow and sharing of data and samples among national research institutions to ensure the widest possible spatial coverage of the studies planned.

- Study Group on processing of early stages of small pelagic fish

The Project will continue to support participating countries in the process of data sharing and joint processing. According to the results of the Working Group on Small Pelagic Fishery Resources (Palermo, 24-25 January, 2013, CC/11/Info 09), a large quantity of data has been gathered in the last years on the abundance and distribution of early life stage (i.e. eggs and larvae) of small pelagic fish in different areas of the south-central Mediterranean Sea. The Working Group acknowledged the importance to take advantage of the existing data to make progress towards the description of the distribution of different life stages in small pelagic fishery species. In this context, the Project will support the organisation of a Study Group with the overall objectives of: i) identifying the possible approach to share and merge the available national data; and ii) initiating a joint exercise on the entire set of data for mapping areas of concentration of different ontogenetic stages of small pelagic fish. The achievements of the Study Group will pave the way for jointly defining potential management measures for the fisheries exploiting small pelagic fish.

- Working Group on small pelagic fisheries resources

The annual MedSudMed Working Group (WG) on Small Pelagic Fishery Resources is tentatively planned to take place in the second semester of 2013. According to the conclusions of the previous meetings on small pelagic fish (Italy, January 2012 and January 2013), the meeting will aim to: i) discuss results of joint activities carried out in 2013 and plan possible follow up; ii) define priorities to be addressed to progress in the monitoring and appraisal of the state of small pelagic fish and fisheries; iii) progress in the organisation of joint surveys at sea to be carried out in the short and medium term. The meeting could be tentatively be held in the second half of 2013.

c) Training activities and national capacity development

The Project will continue to support the strengthening of national expertise through the implementation of specific activities. The Project will also continue to consider as a priority the full involvement of all the research institutes and scientists from the participating countries in the activities organised. The involvement of national administrations in the process of developing capacity and a common background/view on fisheries and marine resources will also be foreseen. The strengthening of the national capacity in terms of expertise will therefore be promoted through the support of specific research programmes that

are coherent with the activities of the Project. Seminars and training activities will also be considered i) for the implementation of research activities, ii) to standardise scientific methodology and iii) to provide scientific institutions and administrations with tools and skills to discuss possible options for managing fisheries.

In particular, activities foreseen for the coming period could include:

- on-the-job training during the surveys at sea (e.g., acoustic, ichthyoplankton surveys) and data processing;
- on-the-job trainings on statistical processing of data for stock assessment and population dynamics (in collaboration with the other regional Projects and GFCM).
- Specific training activities (e.g. on fish ageing) could be jointly organised with the other FAO Mediterranean Projects;
- Training course on ichthyoplankton data sampling and progressing, in cooperation with CopeMed II and GFCM;
- Training on the use of the AdriaMed Trawl Surveys Information System (ATrIS);
- Training on the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries for the development of fisheries management plan for experts and national administration in cooperation with the Project GEF-MedLME.

The organisation of *ad hoc* training programmes upon request of the participating institutes can be foreseen, upon budget availability.

Training activities, in general, will be coordinated with the other FAO Regional Projects, in order to avoid duplication or overlapping of activities.

Wherever possible, and on the basis of budget availability, the Project will continue providing the equipment necessary to the institutes for the implementation of the Project activities.

d) Web site and information system*

The contents of the MedSudMed portal (www.faomedsudmed.org), will be updated and reorganized based on the main Project components and areas of activity to group information more logically and improve access to areas of interest for website users. Following the reorganization of the MedSudMed portal, there will be the need to create new thematic sections, according to the new structure, which will focus on specific subjects e.g. fishery resources; demersal crustaceans.

In addition, following the discussion held during the MedSudMed WG on demersal and small pelagic resources (Malta, September 2012 and January 2013 respectively) the Project will support the development of a section holding information on the main fisheries target species as described in the technical reviews published by the Project, MedSudMed Technical Documents No. 15 and the forthcoming MedSudMed Technical Document No. 29.

e) Strengthening the cooperation with the other FAO Mediterranean Projects and other initiatives in the region

The existing cooperation with other FAO Regional Projects (RP) such as the AdriaMed Project will continue and further collaboration with CopeMed II, and EastMed will be sought. In this context, the indications provided during the internal coordination meeting among the Projects (Rome, January 2013) will be taken into consideration.

Areas of cooperation have been indicated for experimental surveys at sea and socio-economic aspects of fisheries and training. Synergies are also sought with the GEF Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem - MedSea LME Project, Sub-Component 3.2: Promote the Sustainable Use of Fisheries Resources in the Mediterranean through the application of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries -- Activity 3.2.1: Application of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries, for the identification of training needs and priorities for mainstreaming the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries into fisheries research and management. In particular, synergies will be sought, together with CopeMed II, in the implementation of the activities foreseen in the second phase of the GEF-MedLME, finalized to the reduction of bycatch of the bottom trawl fisheries in the Gulf of Gabès, Tunisia (GSAs 13 and 14). The overall objective of such cooperation is that of ensuring the achievement of the best possible results. In this context, the sharing of resources could be foreseen as appropriate according to the priorities and thematic areas identified during the Project Coordination Committee.

Cooperation with international institutions or projects on topics that may be of common interest will also be sought. Synergies with other initiatives underway in the Mediterranean regarding fishery subjects of interest for the Project region will be sought for the sake of avoiding duplication of efforts and optimizing the use of human and financial resources.

Training activities will be coordinated among all the Projects, in order to avoid duplication or overlapping. The participation of other Regional Projects' experts in training courses organized by MedSudMed will be foreseen as well as the contrary.

The preparation of common informative material (leaflets, CD-rom, etc.) that can improve the visibility of the RPs in the Mediterranean area and in the international context is foreseen. Moreover, the Project will participate in the Coordination Committees of CopeMed II, EastMed and AdriaMed where additional synergies will be identified.

The Project will seek synergies with the FAO Regional and sub-regional offices in the Mediterranean and Near-East, region such as the Sub-regional Office for North Africa (verificare SNE), Regional Office for North Africa and Near East (RNE) and Sub-regional Office for the Gulf Cooperation Council States and Yemen (SNE) for capacity development on stock assessment and coordinating activities.

Strengthening the cooperation with the FAO GFCM

In line with previous decisions of the Coordination Committees and with the recommendations arising from the Independent Evaluation study carried out in 2012, the Project will continue to strengthen international and regional cooperation at Mediterranean level with the FAO GFCM and its subsidiary bodies, according to budget availability, (SAC, SubCommittees, Working Groups) through: i) the preparation of scientific contributions for FAO GFCM events; ii) the participation of experts from the Project participating institutes in FAO GFCM events; and iii) the support to the countries to be compliant with the FAO GFCM

requests. Moreover the Project will act in synergy with, and will be part of, the new GFCM framework programme for 2013-2018. Interactions with the GFCM will be further strengthened with the overall purpose of taking the best possible advantage of expertise available at sub-regional level, the lessons learnt and overall resources available.