



ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING OF THE  
FISHERY RESOURCES AND THE ECOSYSTEMS  
IN THE STRAITS OF SICILY

**MEDSUDMED**

GCP/RER/010/ITA  
GCP/INT/021/EC

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## MedSudMed

Report of the Twelfth Meeting of the  
Coordination Committee

Tunis, Tunisia, 14-16 April 2014

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.

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## 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.

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### Preparation of this document

This document is the final version of the report of the Twelfth 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), Tunis, Tunisia, 14-16 April 2014.

### Acknowledgements

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The Twelfth 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 AdriaMed, CopeMed II and EastMed Projects, as well as staff of the MedSudMed Project. 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 belief that continuing the Project can only bring success and be beneficial for each of the participating countries was affirmed.

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# **Report of the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MedSudMed Coordination Committee**

**Tunisia, 14-16 April 2014**

## **Opening of the meeting and election of the Chairman (Agenda Item n. 1)**

1. The 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the MedSudMed Coordination Committee was held in Gammarth, Tunisia, 14-16 April 2014, kindly hosted by the Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer (INSTM).
2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Italian Donor, the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies (MiPAAF), representatives from the countries participating in the Project (Italy, Libya, Malta and Tunisia), a representative of FAO AdriaMed Project, a representative of the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department-Marine and Inland Fisheries Branch (FIRF), a representative of the FAO Sub-regional Office for North Africa (SNE), a representative of the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) as well as the staff of the FAO MedSudMed Project.
3. Mr Othman Jarboui, on behalf of the Director General of the Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer (INSTM), welcomed the Committee members and expressed his honour at having the Committee members gathered in Tunisia in occasion of the twelfth MedSudMed Coordination Committee meeting. He also wished to welcome in particular the representatives from Libya, expressing the satisfaction to see them again participating actively in the activities of the Project. The Committee elected Mr Jarboui as Chair for this session of the MedSudMed Coordination Committee.
4. The FAO MedSudMed Project Coordinator, Mr Enrico Arneri, took the floor and thanked the Tunisian authorities for hosting the meeting. He welcomed the Delegations to the city of Gammarth and thanked the participating countries for their strong commitment and involvement at scientific and administrative level, which has resulted in the project achievements.
5. Mr Jarboui draw the delegates' attention to the meeting documents prepared by the Project both as printed papers and in electronic format on a USB pen drive.
6. The representatives of the participating countries, Malta, Italy, Libya, thanked the Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer (INSTM) of Tunisia for hosting the meeting and the MedSudMed Project for the support given to the countries. The national representatives further recognized the importance of the Project for the future responsible management of fisheries in the Project's area and stressed the role that each cooperating country could play and the advantages it could get from this process. The Italian Donor, (MiPAAF), and the EC DG MARE for their continuous support to the Project were also thanked, as well as the FAO MedSudMed

staff for the preparation of the meeting and for the hard work that has been put into the finalisation of the documents presented.

7. On behalf of the Government of Italy and in particular of the Ministry for Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies (MiPAAF), Mr Luca Bedin from the Fisheries Directorate thanked the INSTM for the kind hospitality and the Project for the work carried out so far.

### **Adoption of the Agenda (Agenda Item n. 2)**

8. The Agenda was presented to the Coordination Committee. The Chair invited the participants to offer any comments. The Agenda was adopted with no changes.

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

9. 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 May 2013 to April 2014 are described. The activities carried out correspond to the work programme and recommendations of the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MedSudMed Coordination Committee, as well as continuing follow-up to the FAO independent evaluation carried out in 2012.
10. The Coordination Committee was informed that, on the basis of the indications which emerged from the independent evaluation by the FAO Office of Evaluation (2012), a concept note for the potential future role and strategies of the Project has been drafted. This concept note illustrates a FAO-FIRF common programme for fisheries in the Mediterranean Sea, under which the MedSudMed Project, as well as all the other FAO Mediterranean Projects (AdriaMed, EastMed and CopeMed II) would converge. FAO FIRF has prepared a roadmap that foresees the preparation of a draft project document detailing the strategy and approach for a common Mediterranean framework programme and the next steps to be accomplished.
11. The meeting was reminded of the five main areas of intervention of the Project: 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.



12. Where the Project's activities are concerned, the Meeting was informed that a series of activities was implemented in relation to Objective 1, 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. In relation to fisheries resources, the Project organised the annual meeting of the Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources jointly with CopeMed II. The Working Groups were jointly organized in order to improve cooperation in the central and western Mediterranean Sea and to enhance the projects' achievements and to optimise human and financial resources. The meeting dealt with the standardisation and joint processing of bottom trawl survey data for mapping the spatial distribution and stock assessment of fisheries resources in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. A road map to improve the appraisal of the state of demersal fish stocks and fisheries in the area by integrating all existing biological and economic data was also discussed. Technical discussion was held on the development of fisheries management strategies in the south-central Mediterranean for demersal fisheries. The issues raised by GFCM SAC were also taken into consideration.
13. The Project informed the Committee on progress in the assessment of the stock dynamic and fisheries of *Parapenaeus longirostris* and *Merluccius merluccius*. An *ad hoc* meeting was organised by the Project, during which the joint stock assessments of these two species in the MedSudMed area carried out in 2012 were updated and further improved. Additional shared fisheries target species to be jointly assessed in the framework of the Project were also identified and the priorities for the next period were discussed.
14. The identification of critical areas like nursery and spawning grounds is considered fundamental to describe dynamic of fisheries resources. In this view, further progress was made using the results of the inter-calibration exercise at sea of bottom trawl surveys carried out in July 2011. In 2013, survey data gathered throughout the MedSudMed area were standardised, pooled together and jointly processed. As results, maps were produced describing areas of concentration of juveniles (nurseries) and adults (spawning grounds) of *P. longirostris* and *M. merluccius* in all the Project area.
15. MedSudMed continued to support the identification of shared stocks of *Octopus vulgaris* in the south central-Mediterranean. During the intersessional period the genomic comparison of *O. vulgaris* samples collected in the entire Project area was completed and a draft report was produced depicting results achieved. Moreover, given the importance of demersal crustaceans for fisheries in the south-central Mediterranean Sea, the Project finalized the preparation of a review on selected demersal crustacean species.
16. Where fisheries management is concerned, the Project promoted *ad hoc* discussion with the countries on the harmonisation of closed fisheries seasons in the Gulf of Gabès and on the case studies identified by the GFCM Secretariat for the

development of multiannual fisheries management plans in the central and eastern Mediterranean Sea (e.g. fisheries exploiting *P. longirostris*, *M. merluccius* and associates species in the south-central Mediterranean Sea).

17. The Meeting was then informed on Project activities regarding small pelagic fisheries resources. Particular importance was given to enlarging and consolidating the group of researchers involved in studies on small pelagic fish and the annual MedSudMed Working Group on Small Pelagic Fishery Resources was held. The experts from the participating countries reviewed existing data on pelagic stocks with particular focus on eggs and larvae. They also initiated a joint exercise to produce preliminary maps of areas of concentration for early life stages of small pelagic. To this extent, for the first time, survey data (eggs and larvae) from all the participating countries were merged and jointly processed. Options to standardise acoustic data were explored and a joint exercise to combine and carry out preliminary joint data processing was begun, resulting in the production of preliminary maps outlining the abundance of fish in all the Project area. The priority issues on small pelagics were identified.
18. In collaboration with AdriaMed, CopeMed II and EastMed, the Project coordinated the collection of samples of *Coryphaena hippurus* in the entire Mediterranean region for genetic analysis. The first part of the sampling and sample-processing was completed at the University of Palermo (Italy).
19. The Committee was reminded that MedSudMed is dedicated to supporting the national capacity development, mainly through training courses following specific requests of the participating institutes. The Project staff recalled that MedSudMed sought synergies and is cooperating with the GFCM and its sub-committees, the other FAO Regional Projects, as well as other relevant Mediterranean fisheries-related entities. Several joint activities have been organized to optimize the resources, e.g. the *Joint training course on Improving the Analysis of Fisheries Data: An Introduction to R and the Fisheries Library based on R (FLR)* in November 2013; and the *First Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea* (November 2013).
20. The cooperation with “MedSea Large Marine Ecosystem (MedSea-LME)” Project on topics of common interest executed by FAO-FIRF, was also sought. MedSudMed co-organized the “Atelier de formation sur les plans d'aménagement en accord avec l'approche écosystémique des pêches et de l'aquaculture” (FAO-HQs, Rome, Italy, 10 - 14 June 2013) with MedSea LME and the other FAO Mediterranean Projects (AdriaMed-EastMed-CopeMed). In this framework scientists and fisheries managers from Tunisia were trained. During the meeting, issues of relevant interest at national level concerning the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and Aquaculture (EAF/EAA) in the preparation of fisheries management plans according to the EAF/EAA were dealt with.
21. A key issue is regional coordination and in this respect coordination meetings were held, as well as a meeting to present the proposal of a unique Mediterranean

Programme with the FAO Regional Mediterranean Projects and representative of all the Donors (Italy, Spain and Greece). This was also an opportunity to present to the FAO Representatives of the Mediterranean countries with the concept note for the single Mediterranean Programme. In the framework of the FAO decentralisation process, MedSudMed is reinforcing collaboration with the FAO offices for north Africa (FAO SNE) and Near East (RNE) and cooperation was further sustained with the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean Sea (GFCM) and the GFCM Subsidiary bodies.

22. At the end of the presentation the Chairperson opened the discussion. The Committee members received the information on the work done by the Project positively, recognising adherence to the expected outputs of the previous Coordination Committee meeting. All the countries acknowledged the support being provided by the Italian Donor in continuing to support the Project activities.
23. The Representative of Tunisia, Mr Othman Jarboui, thanked the Project for the wealth of activities carried out which have been an opportunity for the further strengthen the cooperation among the participating countries. He underlined that although some of the activities illustrated are only at initial stage they should play an important role in the future activities of the Project, like the socio-economic aspects of fisheries and the follow up to the genomic analysis of Octopus samples. He further stressed the importance of the work done during the Working Group on demersal fisheries resources on the joint assessment of the stocks and the identification of new stocks to be assessed. He also pointed out that the cooperative framework programme put in place by the Project is providing some results like that on *Coryphaena hippurus*. The importance of the Project in supporting discussion on fisheries management was also pointed out as an example of successful work initiated by the Project.
24. The representative of Malta, Ms Roberta Mifsud, thanked the Project for the large amount of activities carried out. In particular she acknowledged the support provided toward the formulation of joint fisheries management plans that was possible thanks to the cooperative framework established by MedSudMed. She recalled the importance that the Project had for the development of both scientific and administrative aspects of the Maltese fisheries sector. She recalled the importance of the support provided which gave Malta the opportunity to participate in and carry out important joint scientific activities on shared stocks. She also emphasized that the work carried out so far laid the basis for new challenges like the involvement of fisheries administrations and stakeholders in joint discussion.
25. The Italian National focal Point (NFP), Mr Fabio Fiorentino, echoed the representative of Malta by thanking the Project for the many fields of intervention covered in the context of its implementation. Above all the significance of the Project's countries cooperating under a common umbrella was underlined.

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

26. The MedSudMed Project Coordinator introduced the document "Project Future Implementation". The Committee was reminded that the final work plan will take into account the recommendations of this Committee meeting, the priorities expressed by the countries on each activity and the Project's budget availability. The areas of Project intervention remain: demersal fisheries resources; small pelagic fisheries resources; training and national capacity development; the dissemination of information; regional cooperation.
27. The Meeting was informed that the Project will provide technical support on the collection of fisheries related data. Particular attention will be attached to fisheries targeting Deep-water rose shrimp (*Parapenaeus longirostris*) and European hake (*Merluccius merluccius*). The final aim will be to gather a broad knowledge base on fisheries in view of discussion on fisheries management. In this view a multi-disciplinary approach will be adopted and the collection of socio-economic data will be pursued to integrate data on commercial catch and effort. Technical support for activities to monitor natural resources and fisheries in Libya will also be provided.
28. In the forthcoming period the Project will initiate discussion on fishing technology and small scale fisheries (SSF). The discussion on fishing technology will be influential in providing an overview of knowledge on fishing gears in the MedSudMed area, and in establishing the basis for the preparation of a review document on fishing gears in the Mediterranean Sea. A review of current knowledge and state of SSF in MedSudMed countries and on SSF exploitation dynamics will be pursued. An agenda item of the MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources will be devoted to fishing technology and to SSF.
29. For what concern the sharing and use of data, the Project will continue to support the MedSudMed Study Group for the joint processing of survey data. The objectives of the Study Group will be to progress in the description of spatial distribution and abundance of fisheries target species (*P. longirostris* and *M. merluccius*) in the Project area and to initiate discussion on the characterisation of fish assemblages and of biocenoses associated to *P. longirostris* and *M. merluccius*. To ensure the proper dissemination of Project results, ongoing technical documents on some specific fisheries resources will also be finalised.
30. The MedSudMed Coordinator presented plans to organise a meeting with the involvement of both scientific community and representatives of fisheries' administrations and fisheries' associations of participating countries. The meeting will contribute to the technical discussion for the development of an internationally agreed multi-annual management plan for fisheries in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. The output of the meeting will be the definition of a roadmap that, in the medium term, would result in the development of harmonised approaches for the management of fisheries targeting *Parapenaeus longirostris*, *Merluccius merluccius* and associated species. In the development of this issue synergies will be sought with the GFCM

(including its Framework Programme 2013-2018), which will be the final forum for the discussion and adoption of any international management plan.

31. The Project foresees the organisation of the annual MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources. The Working Group will be the forum for reviewing activities carried out during technical meeting and initiate discussion on new issues like fishing technology and small scale fisheries. The meeting will be held in September/October 2014.
32. Where small pelagic resource are concerned, the Project will continue to support the standardisation of surveys at sea and joint processing of survey data. In this context an inter-ship comparison for the Italian and Tunisian research vessels will be organised. A Study Group will be organised to complete the standardisation and joint processing of acoustic data for biomass estimation and to progress in the joint processing of ichthyoplankton data for the identification of nurseries and spawning grounds.
33. The joint processing of ichthyoplankton and acoustic data will continue during MedSudMed Working Group on Small Pelagic Fisheries resources. During this Working Group progress on studies for the identification of shared stocks using a multi disciplinary approach will be reviewed and technical support to this issue planned.
34. Transversal to the activities mentioned will be the implementation of training activities to be coordinated and harmonized among the Projects which operate in the Mediterranean. In particular, theoretical and on-the-job training activities will be carried out during the inter-ship comparison for acoustic surveys; theoretical and field training activities on data collection will be performed; in synergy with the “MedSea Large Marine Ecosystem (MedSea-LME)” project, MedSudMed will continue the training activities on the EAF/EAA and its implementation. Training on stock assessment at basic and advanced level has been indicated on several occasions as a requirement, opportunities will be sought. Moreover the Project will organize a training course on the use of the software environment for statistical analyses “R” and the related use of the Fisheries Library developed in R (FLR), in cooperation with the other FAO Mediterranean Projects. An *ad hoc* capacity development component will be developed for experts of the Marine Biology Research Centre of Tajura (Libya).
35. Furthermore, existing cooperation with other FAO Regional Projects will continue to be encouraged; the indications provided during the internal coordination meetings among Projects will also be taken into consideration. As well as actively collaborating with FAO GFCM and with other regional initiatives.
36. At the end of the presentation the Chairperson opened the floor for comments and discussion. He congratulated the Project for the ambitious work plan presented. He acknowledged the importance of the work done on demersals resources and wished that some specific activities be allocated the proper time.

37. The representative of Tunisia, Mr Rhida M'Rabet, welcomed the work plan and acknowledged the challenges that it involved for both the Project and the participating countries. With reference to the work plan on demersal fisheries resources, he wished that activities be focused to finalize the work already initiated on target species *Parapenaeus longirostris* and *Merluccius merluccius*. He highlighted that the work to progress toward the definition of a management plan for these fisheries is a priority for the countries and for the Project itself. The same approach followed for the demersal fisheries resources should be also applied to the small pelagic. Accordingly, he suggested that target species and target areas be identified on these resources to focus on.
38. He welcomed the inclusion in the work plan of fishing technology issues and suggested to focus actions toward the long term improvement of selectivity for demersal trawlers. On this same issue, he reiterated the importance to collect all the information on fishing gears compiled at national level in order to prepare a fishing gear catalogue. This action will catalyze the summarization of these information in the Project areas and at later stage at Mediterranean level.
39. The Italian National Focal Point thanked for the presentation that provided a clear picture of the wider framework in which MedSudMed will operate. He concurred on the importance to progress on the discussion in support to fisheries management. In this view, he pointed out that, the state of the stock of *P. longirostris* and *M. merluccius* will not likely change significantly in the short term. Accordingly, experts' efforts in the near future should not be focused only on updating the stock assessment for such species but can be diverged also toward: i) the description of their spatial distribution and abundance; and ii) the definition of the associated fish assemblages. He also highlighted the importance to study the fine genetic structure of *P. longirostris* and *M. merluccius* populations in the MedSudMed area to better understand the connections between nurseries areas and the fraction of the stocks exploited by commercial fisheries. In this view he informed the Committee that some projects focusing on this topic are already ongoing but their area coverage is limited to the northern part of the Mediterranean Sea. Accordingly he suggested that the same approach followed for the genomic study of *Coryphaena hippurus* could be followed also for *P. longirostris* and *M. merluccius*.
40. In addition, in order to properly support technical discussion on fisheries management, relevant information on the spatial distribution of fishing effort for demersal trawlers in the MedSudMed area should be collected/compiled. He also suggested that synergies between the experts working on demersals and small pelagics should be found and he brought the example of the eggs and larvae survey that are in place in the Project area that could be used to collect useful information on demersal eggs and larvae.
41. For what concern the capacity development component, Mr Fiorentino pointed out that effort should be devoted to the organization of a training course on fish age determination through otoliths reading. The course should outline all the steps of the aging procedure, from extraction to final reading. In addition, the standardization of

age determination for some species among teams that already work on age determination should also be pursued through, e.g., an inter-calibration exercise.

42. For what concern the study on the fine genetic structure of *P. longirostris* and *M. merluccius*, the Project will explore the possibility to find with the ongoing projects and coordinating the collection of samples from the entire MedSudMed area. Regarding the training on fish age determination, the Committee was informed that the same priority was pointed out also for the Adriatic region. Accordingly, synergies with AdriaMed on the development of a training programme on this topic will be sought.
43. The representatives of Libya, in agreement with the suggestion to focus on the fisheries management plans, pointed out that the timing covered by the work plan is only the 2014, while the Project would need a longer horizon to plan and set up long term objectives. He wished that the work initiated in the Gulf of Gabès be enlarged also by including data from Libya. He singled out the need for his country to start data collection on deep-water rose shrimps and wished the support of the Project to put in place a pilot action on the collection of catch and effort data on this species. Regarding the fishing technology activities, he informed the Committee that a catalogue of fishing gears, mainly used by small scale fisheries in Libya, is being finalized and will be published in the next months. The document will be put at disposal of the Project when the inventory/catalogue of fishing gears in the MedSudMed area is concerned.
44. Following the discussion on fisheries management plans, the Committee was recalled that the proposed work plan foresees three meetings on demersal resources that could be used as three different moments to make converging all the information needed to progress on the management plan. The “*ad hoc* meeting on fisheries management” could be used to make an inventory of existing information and to define a roadmap for further actions; the Study Group could address the issues of spatial distribution and the identification of critical areas of *P. longirostris* and *M. merluccius*, and the definition of fish assemblages; the Working Group could be instrumental to tackle the ancillary information like fishery socio-economy aspects, fishing technology. The Committee concurred on the importance to have the first meeting before summer in order to define a road map that will lead, in the medium term, to the drafting of the fisheries management plan.
45. The representative of Malta concurred on the proposal to focus 2014 activities to progress on fisheries management plans. She also highlighted that this action involve challenges and a strong commitment at country level that will be reflected already in the preparatory work that each country should complete in support of each planned meeting. Therefore she proposed that the preparatory activities, to be completed at country level, be clearly defined in order to put the countries in the position to timely cope with all the requirements. She also underlined that another challenge will be the involvement of all the stakeholders in the meeting for fisheries management and requested the support of the Project on this issue.

46. She also brought the Committee's attention to the preliminary outputs of the genomics analysis of *Octopus* in the Gulf of Gabes. The study pointed out the occurrence of separate stocklets in the MedSudMed area thus calling for local management of fisheries exploiting this species. To this extent, she wished that the support of the Project be provided also for the identification and definition of local fisheries management plans. Eventually, regarding the training needs she reiterated the importance to have an advanced training course on stock assessment.
47. Following the discussion on fisheries management plan, the representative of Tunisia urged that the lack of some data should not prevent to finalize the activities planned. He then recalled that any missing data can be integrated to improve a management plan at a later stage.
48. Regarding the small pelagic fisheries resources, he reiterated the importance to focus on selected species and areas like it was done for the demersal resources. He also opened the possibility to invite experts from Algeria to the next meeting of the Working Group on Small Pelagics.
49. The representative of the GFCM Secretariat congratulated the Project for the interesting work plan that, although ambitious, is well focused on the priorities identified within the framework of the Project. He acknowledged the commitment of the countries to set the definition of fisheries management plan as a priority and to jointly identify all the steps needed to progress toward its definition.
50. Referring to the work carried out on management plans within the GFCM, he recalled that the experts of the Project area agreed on a series of elements for the management of *P. longirostris* and *M. merluccius* fishery, included in the report of the sixteenth session of the SAC, as well as to collect all available information on this fishery in a background technical document. He informed the meeting that the document has been finalized and will be shortly circulated to the countries for comments and feedback.
51. He single out that, since the activities on fisheries management planning are now initiated at different level in all the Mediterranean countries, an effort to harmonize the methodologies used should be foreseen. Therefore he invited the countries to contribute to the definition of a common methodology to be implemented at Mediterranean level for the development of fisheries management plans.
52. He then reiterated the importance of the support of MedSudMed and of all the FAO Mediterranean Projects, to the identification of common methodologies to be applied at Mediterranean level. He concluded reiterating the importance to continue seeking synergies between the GFCM and FAO regional Projects throughout the year.
53. The representative of Tunisia stressed the need for joint training activities on board of research vessels, fundamental to ensure that common methodology at all steps of data handling is applied.
54. The representative of Italy, Mr Angelo Bonanno, in agreement with the proposal on training on board, mentioned that for the small pelagic data, in particular for the acoustic surveys, within the EU MEDIAS programme, efforts are made to ensure that



a common protocol is adopted in the Mediterranean and to ensure the participation of all the Mediterranean countries to the meeting. He then echoed the importance to participate in common surveys and invited experts from all the Project area interested in participating at the next surveys planned.

55. The Donor representative acknowledged the work done by the Project, its achievements in terms of developing cooperation and sound results since 2001 and the extent of the work plan proposed for 2014. He recalled the relevance Italy has given to the Mediterranean scientific cooperation on fisheries. The support that the Italian Government provides to the FAO Mediterranean regional projects and to MedSudMed in particular is considered highly significant in consolidating these activities. In this view, he further underlined the interest of the Italian Donor in continuing the support to the Project in the next phase.

**FAO General fisheries commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) work plan for the next intersession period (Agenda item n. 5)**

56. The GFCM Secretariat representative briefly introduced the draft work plan of GFCM SAC envisaged for 2014/2015. GFCM Regular activities and GFCM Framework Programme work plan, as well as new proposed activities, presented at the last meeting of the SAC were illustrated. He underlined that some activities like the meeting to follow up on the identification of fisheries management plans in South - Central Mediterranean will foresee a very active contribution from the MedSudMed countries. The intersessional actions indicated by the different SAC Sub-Committees, to be brought to the attention of the GFCM, were also illustrated. The Committee was informed that the work plans will be discussed at the next GFCM session in May 2014 for final approval, and members of the Project were invited to participate in the discussion. The Committee members expressed thanks for the very comprehensive presentation. The large list of proposed activities/events was noted and the Committee acknowledged that some of the activities were postponed to the 2015 to ensure their feasibility.
57. The representative of Tunisia by underlining the relevance of elasmobranchs fisheries related activities for North African countries urged the need to revise some of the proposed activities on these species. The specificities of fisheries of these species should be taken into consideration when conservation measures are dealt with.
58. The Italian National Focal Point concurred on the importance of these species in the entire MedSudMed area, where the abundance registered of this taxon is probably the highest in Mediterranean. Therefore some discussion should be brought to the attention for the next GFCM session to fine-tune some of the activities proposed on these species in the SAC work plan. Concerning the activities related to marine protected areas, he informed the participants on the outputs of the MEDISEH Project “Mediterranean sensitive habitat” (developed within the MAREA “*Mediterranean hAlieutic Resources Evaluation and Advice*” framework contract). MEDISEH, based on available information, reviewed and mapped sensitive areas in the Mediterranean

Sea. Therefore, he wished that any information already collected in other projects or similar initiatives be taken into consideration when preparing GFCM meetings, in order to optimize and take the best possible advantage from information available.

59. The representative of Malta, echoed the importance to avoid any duplication of work and to take advantage of information and data already collected by similar initiatives at Mediterranean level. Concerning the marine protected areas related activities, she brought the example of the MedPAN (Network of Marine Protected Area Managers in the Mediterranean) and CREAM (Coordinating Research in Support to Application of Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and Management Advice in the Mediterranean and Black Seas) Projects that already carried out activities towards the identification of area-based fisheries management measures under the provision of national legislation.
60. The Committee underlined the importance to find synergies in terms of calendar and resources, between the activities foreseen by the GFCM and the FAO regional Projects. In this sense, it was pointed out that some of the Projects activities are preliminary to the work of the GFCM in terms of background documents preparation or networking. In addition, the issue of the feasibility of some of the activities planned by the GFCM, that foresee efforts at national level, was put forward. The timing and the resources foreseen for these activities should be considered at GFCM level in order to ensure the delivery timing foreseen by the SAC work plan.

#### **Proposal for a new Mediterranean region fisheries programme**

61. The Coordination Committee's attention was drawn to document CC/12/04. The Concept Note for a single Mediterranean Region Fisheries Programme developed by FAO was illustrated by the representative of FAO FIRF, Mr Paolo De Donno. The new Programme should be seen as the natural continuation of the existing four projects which are due to end in December 2014. The overall objective of the Programme aimed at strengthening regional and country-specific capacity for sustainable fisheries through the application of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries. He provided an overview of the financial and budgetary situation of the current FAO Regional Fisheries Projects in the Mediterranean. Mr De Donno stressed that the new programme would build on the experience, lessons learned and result achieved and will improve the current mechanism for the implementation of activities by increasing more activities related to the EAF component, reducing the administrative layer and seeking the possibility to amplify the funding sources to potential Donors across the region.
62. He drew the attention of the participants to the structure of the new Mediterranean programme, which when established will maintain the current existing sub-regionalization by keeping the sub-regional specificities. In this respect, four steering committees (one per sub-region) are foreseen to be established back to back with a regional steering committee. He concluded the presentation by illustrating the roadmap identified for the formulation of the new programme.

63. After the presentation, the Chairperson opened the discussion and requested comments from the participants. He also reiterated the importance in a multi-donor Programme such as this, that funds provided by any single donor be allocated for activities and areas relevant for this same donor. He also pointed out the importance to clarify in the new Project Document the way to cope with possible difficulties that may raise in prioritization of activities and allocation of funds between the different sub-regions.
64. Some concerns were raised on the proper functioning of the Overall Steering Committee and its link with the Sub-Regional Coordination Committees. The Committee further underlined the importance of maintaining a sub-regional structure with an independent Coordination Committee in charge of identifying priorities and defining the sub-regional work plan. Such a structure would ensure continuity of the work carried out in the current phase of the Project without precluding the benefits of the establishment of a wide Mediterranean Programme.
65. The Italian National Focal Point welcomed in principle the proposal of the new programme. He recalled the Committee that data sharing and joint analysis is probably one of the most challenging and time requiring process when several countries are concerned. He emphasised that several differences may exist in data collection and processing in the Mediterranean preventing their successful merging and joint analysis. Nevertheless, this process was initiated since long time for demersal species in the framework of the MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources. This effort led also to a considerable amount of work done in the joint analysis and evaluation of resources. Therefore he pointed out that the new programme should be instrumental for the standardisation of fisheries data collection at Mediterranean level. Therefore some specific component of the Programme should address this topic.
66. The representative of Malta, echoed the interventions previously done and stressed the importance of data standardization and harmonization among the countries, therefore the role that the Project now and the new Programme later can play in this sense. She also shared the concerns on the allocation of the resources and suggested that this issue should be clarified in the Project Document.
67. The representatives of Libya raised some concerns on mechanisms that will convey the funds from the multi-donor component to the sub-regions. In addition, the new Programme should take into consideration the different priorities among sub-regions: different strategies and mechanisms should be put in place to cope with these differences.
68. Furthermore, concern was also expressed on the timing foreseen both for the countries to revise the Project Document and for the implementation of the new Programme. Taking into account all the administrative steps necessary to ensure that the document is forwarded through all the administrative and technical units concerned, a broader time frame was considered more appropriate.

69. The Committee reiterated the doubts raised on other occasions by national representatives on the possible overlapping of such a structure with the GFCM. The participants were reminded that although working towards the same final goal, the mandate of the FAO FIRF Regional Projects, and thus of the FAO Mediterranean Programme is quite different from the mandate of the GFCM. The role of technical support provided to the countries by the FAO is meant at enhancing international cooperation and providing participating countries with tools to deal with international requirements and priorities.

70. After thorough discussion and comments provided on the content of Document CC/12/03, the Committee agreed on the programme of activities proposed and suggestions made by the participants for the coming period; some specific elements were pointed out with reference to some activities and related outputs. The activities will be carried out upon budget availability. In particular, the Committee stressed the importance of the following activities:

- Continue pursuing technical discussion on management of fisheries exploiting *P. longirostris* and *M. merluccius*;
- Organise an *ad hoc* meeting on management by ensuring the participation of all fisheries stakeholders;
- Organise the study Group for the joint processing of survey data for mapping spatial distribution and abundance of fisheries resources and definition of fish assemblages;
- Provide technical support to fisheries data collection (e.g. socio-economic and commercial catch) focusing on *P. longirostris* and *M. merluccius* fisheries;
- Initiate joint discussion on fishing technology for the drafting of an inventory catalogue (to be carried out during the Working Group on Demersals);
- Support joint discussion for reviewing current knowledge on small scale fisheries (to be carried out during the Working Group on Demersals);
- Supporting the inter-ship comparison of acoustic surveys;
- Organise the Study Group joint processing of small pelagic data;
- Organise the annual meeting of the MedSudMed Working Group on Small Pelagics and Demersals fisheries resources.

#### **Other matters (Agenda item n. 6)**

71. The Delegates and Meeting participants expressed their thanks to the INSTM for having hosted the meeting and outlined once more the importance of the work of the Project in supporting and promoting cooperation in the MedSudMed area. The Donors which provided the necessary support to ensure continuity to the activities of the Project were also thanked.

**Date and venue of the next Coordination Committee meeting (Agenda item n. 7)**

72. Upon the kind invitation of the Italian delegation, the next Meeting of the MedSudMed Coordination Committee will be held in Italy. The date and venue will be proposed in due time by the Project. This proposal was welcomed by the Meeting participants.

73. The report was adopted on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

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## 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.*

### **4. 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 activities and priorities. 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. The Concept Note for a Mediterranean regional fisheries project will be illustrated and discussed.*

### **5. FAO General fisheries commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) work plan for the next intersession period**

*The scientific and technical activities foreseen in the FAO GFCM work plan for 2014 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.*

### **6. Other matters**

### **7. Date and venue of the next Coordination Committee meeting**



### List of Documents

<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC12/01</b>	Provisional annotated agenda
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC12/02</b>	Report on Project's Progress (March 2013 – March 2014)
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC12/03</b>	Development of the Project's Programme
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC12/04</b>	Concept note for a Mediterranean region fisheries programme
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC12/Info01</b>	Provisional list of participants
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC12/Info02</b>	Report of the Eleventh Meeting of the Coordination Committee. <i>MedSudMed Technical Documents N.30</i>
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC12/Info03</b>	Joint CopeMed II-MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources in the south-central Mediterranean Sea (Gammarth, Tunisia, 23-27 September 2013) – Meeting memorandum
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC12/Info04</b>	MedSudMed <i>Ad hoc</i> meeting for the joint assessment of demersal fisheries resources in the south-central Mediterranean Sea (St. Julian, Malta, 14-16 January 2014) – Meeting memorandum
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC12/Info05</b>	Stock Assessment Forms on Demersal Fisheries Resources, namely <i>Parapenaeus longirostris</i> . Presented at the GFCM-SAC – Working Group on Stock Assessment on Demersal Species (Montenegro, 28 January-01 February 2014)
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC12/Info06</b>	Stock Assessment Forms on Demersal Fisheries Resources, namely <i>Merluccius merluccius</i> . Presented at the GFCM-SAC – Working Group on Stock Assessment on Demersal Species (Montenegro, 28 January-01 February 2014)
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC12/Info07</b>	Stock identification of <i>Octopus vulgaris</i> – genomic comparison
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC12/Info08</b> <i>Attaccare Cover</i>	MedSudMed Working Group on Small Pelagic Fishery Resources in the south-central Mediterranean Sea (FAO HQs, Rome, Italy 04 – 06 March – Meeting memorandum
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC12/Info09</b>	- Major activities of the FAO Regional Projects. Documents presented at the FAO GFCM 37 <sup>th</sup> Annual Session (Split, Croatia, 13 - 17 May 2013) - Major activities of the FAO Regional Projects.

	Documents presented at the FAO GFCM-SAC 16th session (St Julian, Malta, 17-21 March 2014)
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC10/Info10</b>	Deep-water rose shrimps, European hake and related fisheries in the MedSudMed Project area – Meeting Terms of References
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info11</b>	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- Advance copy.
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info12</b>	Stock identification of <i>Coryphaena hippurus</i> – genomic comparison
<b>FAO-MedSudMed: CC11/Info13</b>	List of Documents

## **Report on the Project's Progress (May 2013 – April 2014)**

### **Introduction**

This paper provides an overview of the main activities carried out by the Project MedSudMed between May 2013 and April 2014, 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 work programme and recommendations of the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the MedSudMed Coordination Committee (Sliema, Malta, 23-24 April 2013; CC/12/info 02) were implemented.

In the intersessional period, following the indication formulated by the independent evaluation (FAO Office of Evaluation, June 2012), a concept note for the potential future role and strategies of the Project was drafted. The concept note foresees the creation of a FAO-FIRF common Programme for fisheries in the Mediterranean Sea, under which the MedSudMed Project will converge with all the other FAO Mediterranean Projects, *AdriaMed*, *EastMed* and *CopeMed II*. A preliminary meeting to present the proposal of the unique Mediterranean Programme with the FAO Regional Mediterranean Projects and representatives of all the Donors (Italy, Spain and Greece) was held in FAO-HQ (Rome, 17 July 2013). A second preliminary discussion meeting for the presentation of a concept note describing the Mediterranean Programme was held in November 2013 (Rome, FAO-HQ) with the FAO Representatives of all the Mediterranean countries. The meeting agreed to the proposal roadmap presented by FAO-FIRF that foresees the preparation of a draft project document detailing the strategy, the *modus operandi* and design of the common framework for the Mediterranean, including activities and the presentation of following steps (CC/12/04).

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 in the region, that sometimes resulted 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 development;
3. Regional cooperation;
4. Project communication.

### **1. Cooperative research programmes and Working Groups**

In 2013 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.

The Project, in close cooperation with the research participating institutes, initiated implementation of the work plan for the medium and long term activities identified during the 11<sup>th</sup> MedSudMed Coordination Committee. The work plan was in agreement with the conclusions of the FAO independent evaluation.

#### **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.

##### *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 23-27 September 2013 in Tunis, Tunisia, kindly hosted by the Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer (INSTM). The WG-DEM was attended by 13 researchers from all the research institutes involved in the Project. The meeting was jointly organised with the CopeMed II Working Group on demersals to: i) improve cooperation in the central and western Mediterranean Sea; ii) enhance the overall MedSudMed and CopeMed II achievements; and iii) to optimise human and financial resources. The meeting focused on the standardisation and joint processing of bottom trawl survey data for mapping the spatial distribution and stock assessment of fisheries resources in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. During the MedSudMed WG-DEM a road map to improve the appraisal of the state of demersal fish stocks and fisheries in the MedSudMed Project area by integrating all existing biological and economic data was also discussed. Technical discussion was held on the development of fisheries management strategies in the south-central Mediterranean for demersal fisheries. Consideration was also given to the issues raised by the Scientific Advisory Committee

(SAC) of the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) for 2013-14 specifically referring to the development of fisheries management plan. In this view, discussion was held on the harmonisation of closed season for fisheries in the Gulf of Gabès and on the follow up to the GFCM requests on the application of the guidelines for the development of fisheries management plans. To cover this agenda item, representatives of the national fisheries administrations of participating countries joined the meeting (CC/12/Info 03).

*Ad hoc meeting on the assessment for the joint assessment of demersal fisheries resources in the south-central Mediterranean Sea*

Considerable effort was made by the Project and the research institutes in the south-central Mediterranean Sea to progress toward the appraisal of the state of main fisheries target species. To further progress in the assessment of the stock dynamic and fisheries of *Parapenaeus longirostris* and *Merluccius merluccius*, an *ad hoc* meeting was organised by the Project (St. Julian, Malta, 14-16 January 2014). During the meeting the joint stock assessments of these two species in the MedSudMed area (south-central Mediterranean Sea) carried out in 2012 were updated and further improved. Additional shared fisheries target species to be jointly assessed in the framework of the Project were also identified during the meeting, i.e. *Mullus surmuletus* and *Aristaeomorpha foliacea*. Information available, main gaps and priorities in terms of fisheries monitoring and data requirements to progress in this direction were briefly outlined. The assessment produced on *P. longirostris* and *M. merluccius* were presented and discussed at the meetings of the Working Groups on Demersals of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC-WG) of the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean Sea (GFCM) and endorsed by the GFCM Sub Committee of Stock Assessment (Bar, Montenegro 4-5 February 2014) (CC/12/Info 04, CC/12/Info 05, CC/12/Info 06).

*Identification of nurseries and spawning grounds*

The identification of sensitive areas like nursery and spawning grounds is essential for the implementation of management measures aimed at reducing the impact of fishing on vulnerable stages of species' life cycle and their ecosystems. Great importance has been given by the Project over time to the identification of nurseries and spawning grounds in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. Further progress was made in this view taking advantage of the outcome of the inter-calibration exercise at sea of bottom trawl surveys carried out in July 2011. In 2013, survey data gathered throughout the MedSudMed area were standardised, pooled together and jointly processed. As a result, preliminary maps of the distribution of adults and juveniles of *Merluccius merluccius* in the south-central Mediterranean Sea were produced, thus defining potentially sensitive areas for this species (CC/12/Info 03).

*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 genomic comparison of *O. vulgaris* samples collected in the entire Project area was completed. Collaboration with the University of Oviedo (Spain) was established and all the samples collected were processed. The INSTM of La Goulette was directly involved in this activity. The processing of the

results for the discrimination of population units was also completed. A draft report summarising the results of the analysis carried out was prepared (CC/12/Info 07).

#### *Technical discussion in support of fisheries management*

In 2010 the MedSudMed Coordination Committee (Italy, May 2010), following the successful cooperation established at scientific level, underlined the important role that the Project may have in promoting and supporting the technical discussion on the harmonisation of management strategies in the Project area (south-central Mediterranean Sea). In this view, and according to the priorities indicated by participating countries, an *ad hoc* discussion was held during the MedSudMed WG-DEM held in Tunis in September 2013. Representatives of the national fisheries research institutions of Italy, Libya, Malta and Tunisia and fisheries administrations (Italy, Regione Siciliana, Tunisia and Malta) participated in the meeting. The meeting focused on: i) the harmonisation of closed fisheries seasons in the Gulf of Gabès; and ii) the case studies identified by the GFCM Secretariat for the development of multiannual fisheries management plans in the central and eastern Mediterranean Sea (CC/12/Info 03).

#### *Review on demersal crustacean species*

Given the importance of demersal crustaceans for fisheries in the south-central Mediterranean Sea, the Project finalized the preparation of a review on selected 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 (MedSudMed Technical Document 32, (CC/12/Info 11).

## **1.2. MedSudMed Component on Small Pelagic fish**

As for the previous years and following the requests formulated during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> MedSudMed Coordination Committee meetings (March 2012, April 2013), efforts were made by the Project to pursue the improvement of expertise on small pelagic fisheries resources and the harmonisation of methodologies for data collection at sea, as well as in monitoring areas not regularly covered by national surveys targeting 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 FAO HQ, Rome, 4-6 March 2014. During the meeting national experts: i) reviewed and discussed the results of the joint activities carried out on small pelagic fish in the participating countries in the last year; ii) reviewed the existing data on pelagic stocks with particular focus on eggs and larvae; iii) initiated a joint exercise to produce preliminary maps of areas of concentration for early life stages of small pelagics; iv) explored options to standardise acoustic data and initiate a joint exercise to combine and carry out preliminary joint data processing; v) identified priority issues on small pelagic fisheries and fisheries resources to be jointly addressed in the framework of the Project activities (CC/12/Info 08). As follow up to the joint exercise on eggs and larvae, preliminary

maps outlining the areas of concentration of eggs and larvae of *Engraulis encrasicolus* and *Sardinella aurita* were drafted. Likewise, preliminary maps describing the total biomass of fish as resulting from the joint processing of acoustic data from Italy, Tunisia, Libya and Malta were drafted.

#### *Joint surveys at sea*

According to the recommendations of the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of its Coordination Committee, the Project was called on to support for the implementation of joint surveys at sea. In this view, the organisation of two surveys at sea was foreseen for summer 2013: an inter-ship comparison for acoustic surveys involving the Tunisian and Italian research vessels, R/V Hannibal and R/V Dallporta; and a joint ichthyoplankton survey in western Libyan waters. The technical aspects concerning the sampling scheme, the dates of the work at sea were discussed and agreed on. The administrative procedures to provide the necessary authorisation for the surveys were also initiated. However, due to the unforeseeable unavailability of research vessels, the two activities were postponed.

#### *Activities on shared stocks: Coryphaena hippurus*

Discrimination between 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 improving knowledge on this species 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 sampling and sample-processing (extraction, amplification and sequencing of DNA for group discrimination) was completed at the University of Palermo. This activity is being conducted in synergy with the RITMARE project launched by the Italian National Research Council (CNR). The opportunity 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 (CC/12/Info 12).

## **2. National Capacity development and training**

During the intersessional period, considerable effort was dedicated to further supporting the national capacity development, mainly through training courses following specific requests of the participating institutes. The courses were an opportunity to strengthen scientific collaboration and to exchange competencies between institutes, as they involved scientists belonging to the network that has been 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 and GFCM, 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 to discuss issues of common interest.

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

- FAO Training workshop on the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and to Aquaculture (EAF/EAA) 10 - 14 June 2013 FAO HQ Rome, Italy;
- JRC-GFCM-AdriaMed-MedSudMed-EastMed-CopeMed - Joint training course on Improving the Analysis of Fisheries Data: An Introduction to R and the Fisheries Library based on R (FLR) 4-8 November 2013 GFCM HQ Rome, Italy.

### **3. Regional cooperation**

As indicated in the last meetings of the Coordination Committee and also by the FAO Independent Evaluation, the Project strengthened its liaison with the Donors (MiPAAF, Regione Siciliana and EU-DG-MARE) and intensified the communication flow with them. In the intersessional period, several coordination meetings were held at the MiPAAF headquarters. A coordination meeting with representatives of EU-DGMARE, all the FAO Regional Mediterranean Projects (AdriaMed, MedSudMed, EastMed and CopeMed II) and FIRF staff was held in Brussels, Belgium, 2 July 2013. A meeting to present the proposal of a unique Mediterranean Programme with the FAO Regional Mediterranean Projects and representative of all the Donors (Italy, Spain and Greece) was held in FAO-HQ (Rome, 17 July 2013). The meeting held in November 2013 in FAO-HQ was also a chance to present to the FAO Representatives of the Mediterranean countries with the concept note for the single Mediterranean Programme (22 November 2013, CC/12/04). The liaison with the Donors lead to: i) strengthened coordination; ii) improved information flow; iii) more efficient planning of Project funding; iv) illustration of the concept note for a unique Mediterranean Programme.

The reinforcement of regional cooperation was encouraged by the Project through the participation of regional experts in several workshops, training exercises, 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 operated closely with the FAO Regional Projects AdriaMed, CopeMed II, EastMed, and Med-Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (MedSea-LME). In particular, the Project interacted closely with AdriaMed<sup>1</sup>, with support provided on administrative matters and some technical issues. In this view, the Project also participated in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> AdriaMed Coordination Committee meeting (March, 2012 and March 2013 respectively); ii) Study Group for the application of bottom-trawl survey data to fish stock assessment in South Adriatic Sea (GSA 18) Italy, September 2013) iii) AdriaMed Working Group on Small Scale Fisheries (Montenegro, October 2013) vi) AdriaMed Working Group on Demersal resources (Montenegro, October 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> Scientific Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea



Strong cooperation was also established with the FAO Project CopeMed II to optimise the use of human and financial resources. In this framework, the Projects' Working Group on Demersal Shared Resources was jointly organized.

In addition, several coordination meetings were also held with the other FAO Regional Projects AdriaMed, CopeMed II and EastMed throughout the year (the last in February 2014) 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.

Cooperation with the Project MedSea-LME was also strengthened on topics of common interest. MedSudMed co-organized the "Atelier de formation sur les plans d'aménagement en accord avec l'approche écosystémique des pêches et de l'aquaculture" with MedSea LME and the other FAO Mediterranean Projects (AdriaMed-EastMed-CopeMed) at FAO-HQ, Rome, Italy, 10 - 14 June 2013. Scientists and fisheries managers from Tunisia were trained. During the session, issues of relevant interest at national level concerning the implementation of the EAF/EAA in the preparation of fisheries management plans according to the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and Aquaculture were dealt with. In light of this framework of cooperation, Project staff also participated in a field mission in Tunisia (Tunis, Sfax, Zarzis) on 01-04 July 2013 for the preparation of the bycatch mitigation exercise at sea in the Gulf of Gabès (Tunisia).

In the framework of the FAO decentralisation process, MedSudMed is reinforcing collaboration with the FAO offices for north African (FAO SNE) and Near East (RNE) by: i) liaising periodically; ii) supporting joint initiatives on fisheries; and iii) 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 this framework, the MedSudMed Fishery Monitoring Expert was involved in: i) a field mission to Muscat (Oman) to review the achievements of the first working phase and tentatively plan the next activities of the Technical Cooperation Project TCP/SNG/3402 "*Support to capacity development for fishery stock assessment in GCC countries and Yemen*" in cooperation with FIRF, the FAO RNE and SNG; ii) contribute to the drafting of the Project Proposal, including budget and work plan, for Unilateral Trust Fund (UTF) with Sultanate of Oman "*Oman Trawl Survey Information System*" in cooperation with FAO RNE and AdriaMed.

Cooperation was further sustained with the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean Sea (GFCM) and the GFCM Subsidiary bodies. Several informal meetings of coordination were held with the GFCM Secretariat staff back to back to FAO GFCM events, in order to strengthen the cooperation and to find synergies. In this framework, during the intersession period, the Project facilitated the organization of:

- JRC-GFCM-AdriaMed-MedSudMed-EastMed-CopeMed - Joint training course on Improving the Analysis of Fisheries Data: An Introduction to R and the Fisheries Library based on R (FLR) 4-8 November 2013 GFCM-HQ, Rome Italy;

- GFCM/ FAO FIRF/FAO Sub-regional Projects AdriaMed, CopeMed II, MedSudMed and EastMed, CIHEAM, WWF, MedPAN, First Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, St. Julian's Malta 27-30 November 2013. In the meeting MedSudMed, organized and co-chaired with the other Mediterranean Projects the thematic session I – Current situation of small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea: strategies and methodologies for an effective analysis of the sector.

In addition, a meeting with the GFCM secretariat on the draft Concept Note for a single Regional Project in the Mediterranean,(FAO-HQ, Rome 5 September 2013) was organized.

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/12/Info 09). 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:

- GFCM Task Force Validation meeting of the Task Force Split, Croatia 10-11 May 2013
- GFCM General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean - 37th Session - Split, Croatia 13- 17 May 2013
- GFCM Committee on Compliance (CoC) - 7<sup>th</sup> Session, 2013 May (13-17) Split, Croatia;
- GFCM Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF) -4th Session, 2013 May (13-17) Split, Croatia;
- GFCM SAC JRC-GFCM-AdriaMed-MedSudMed-EastMed-CopeMed - Joint training course on Improving the Analysis of Fisheries Data: An Introduction to R and the Fisheries Library based on R (FLR) GFCM HQ, Rome, Italy 2013 4-8 November 2013
- GFCM/FAO Regional Projects/ First Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea Malta, St. Julian's 27- 30 November 2013
- GFCM CoC Intersessional meeting of the CoC ad hoc working group on compliance - FAO HQ, Rome, Italy 28-29 January 2014
- SAC-SCSA Working Groups on Stock Assessment of Demersal and Small Pelagic species, including: workshop on the definition and estimation of reference points for Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries - Bar, Montenegro 28 Jan -1 Feb 2014
- SAC-SCMEE First Working Group on Marine Protected Areas - Bar, Montenegro 3 February 2014
- SAC-SCSA Working Group on Common methodology to carry out socio-economic analysis - Bar, Montenegro 3 February 2014
- SAC-SCSA Sub-Committee on Stock Assessment - 15h Session - Bar, Montenegro 3-4 February 2014
- SAC-SCSA Sub-Committee on Economic and Social Sciences - 14th Session - Bar, Montenegro 4-5 February 2014
- SAC-SCMEE Sub-Committee on Marine Environment and Ecosystems - 14th Session Bar, Montenegro 4-5 February 2014
- SAC-SCSI Sub-Committee on Statistics and Information - 14th Session - Bar, Montenegro 4-5 February 2014
- GFCM SAC Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) - 16th Session – St. Julian, Malta 17-20 April 2014.

## 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 20 MedSudMed Technical Documents are now available as .pdf files. Over the last year, an average of 1050 pages was visited each month and around 490 documents are downloaded from the site each month.

### 4.2. Technical Documents

One technical document and two scientific reports 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) and of Scientific Reports (GCP/RER/010/ITA/MSM-SR-00) related to meetings and research organised or conducted within the framework of the Project. The MedSudMed Technical Documents are included in the ASFA (Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts) 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:

- MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources in the south-central Mediterranean Sea (Tunis, Tunisia, 23-27 September 2013). GCP/RER/010/ITA/MSM-SR-3. *MedSudMed Scientific Reports*. No 3: 21 pp.
- MedSudMed Working Group on Small Pelagic Fishery Resources in the south-central Mediterranean Sea (FAO HQ, Rome, Italy 31 January – 01 February 2013). GCP/RER/010/ITA/MSM-SR-4. *MedSudMed Scientific Reports*, 4: 21 pp.
- MedSudMed. 2012. Report of the Eleventh 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 phase I). During the 5<sup>th</sup> MedSudMed Coordination Committee meeting (2006), the Committee reviewed the conclusions and recommendations made by the Project's 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 (EU-DG Mare). Current NTE of the project is 31 December 2014. The possibility of further extension is under discussion with both Donors MiPAAF and EU-DGMARE.

The activities proposed in this document take into account the objectives and results achieved so far and the recommendations received during the 11<sup>th</sup> Coordination Committee meeting (April 2013, Sliema, Malta), as well as the indications collected from the countries during a series of informal meetings held with the national staff and with the National Focal Points throughout the intersessional period. The scientific cooperation established within the framework of the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) is also considered. In addition, some of the activities take into account the indications provided by the FAO External Evaluation of the Project carried out March-June 2012 by an independent FAO team.

All the activities planned are integrated and will contribute to the development of the 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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. Synergy with the FAO Project CopeMed II will also be sought in this respect.

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 fisheries related data. The activity will broaden the knowledge base on fisheries in support of discussion for fisheries management. Taking into account the main fisheries target species, particular attention will be paid to fisheries targeting Deep-water rose shrimp (*Parapenaeus longirostris*) and European hake (*Merluccius merluccius*). On the basis of the conclusions of the MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources and of the meetings held during 2013, the Project will foster the integration of data on commercial catch and effort with socio-economic data and with information on fishing technology. With this objective in mind, the Project will explore the possibility to establish actions that, in the short term, could enhance national capacity in socio-economic data collection and analysis and provide national institutions with data on socio-economic aspects of selected fisheries. This could be done through the implementation of a socio-economic survey programme to be carried out at national level and on specific fisheries, e.g. demersal fisheries targeting *Parapenaeus longirostris* and *Merluccius merluccius*. Technical support to the organisation of activities that aim to monitor natural resources and fisheries in Libya will also be provided.

- 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's meeting will be: i) to progress in the standardisation and joint analysis of historical survey data; ii) to progress in the identification of nurseries and spawning grounds for fisheries target species *M. merluccius* and *P. longirostris*; iii) to initiate discussion on the characterisation of biocenoses taking advantage of existing information and data. During the meeting, possible options to further improve and

facilitate the sharing and circulation of fishery data and of packages for data analysis will also be discussed. The activity is tentatively planned in May-June 2014. 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. The structure of the stock/s of *O. vulgaris* in the south-central Mediterranean Sea will be provided, taking advantage of the genomic comparison carried out on *Octopus vulgaris* and completed in 2013.

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

The Project reviewed, with the support of experts from the sub-region, the available information on demersal crustaceans relevant for fisheries in the Project area. The information has been summarised in a specific MedSudMed Technical Document that will be finalized in 2014. Information on *Aristaeomorpha foliacea*, *Melicertus kerathurus*, *Metapenaeus monoceros*, *Nephrops norvegicus*, *Palinurus elephas* and *Parapenaeus longirostris* will be provided in the document, including stock assessment information and maps of nurseries (where available).

- Technical discussion in support of fisheries management planning

The Project will continue to provide technical assistance in the harmonization of existing fisheries management schemes at sub-regional level, 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 on Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF). This activity will also be in line with the indications provided to the Project by the latest FAO External Project Evaluation (2012) on the need to tackle fisheries management issues. In view of the discussion initiated in 2013 in the framework of the Project and during the *GFCM Sub-Regional Workshop on Fisheries Management for Western, Central and Eastern Mediterranean* (Tunisia, October 2013), MedsudMed foresees the organisation of a meeting with the involvement of both scientific community and representatives of fisheries' administrations and fisheries' associations of participating countries. The objective of the meeting would be to contribute to the development of an internationally agreed multi-annual management plan for fisheries in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. The expected outcome is the definition of a roadmap that, in the medium term, would result in the development of harmonised approaches for the management of fisheries targeting *Parapenaeus longirostris*, *Merluccius merluccius* and associated species. The Terms of Reference of the meeting are provided as CC/12/Info 10. Synergies will be sought with the GFCM (including its Framework Programme 2013-2018), which will be the final forum for the discussion and adoption of any international management plan.

- Bio-economic description of demersal fisheries

The Project will support the development of a case study for the bio-economic description of the demersal fisheries targeting deep water shrimps and associated species. According to the conclusions of the MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources (September 2013), the Project will: i) promote the inventory of existing national data on socio-economic aspects of fisheries; ii) coordinate the exchange of information and sharing of data to build up a common platform for joint discussion; and iii) provide technical support for the development of the case study. The outcome of this activity will be discussed in the framework of the next MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal resources. The organisation of an *ad hoc* meeting could also be foreseen to facilitate the discussion and initiate the joint exercise.

- Joint discussion on fishing technology

As follow up to the indications received during 2013 and the 16<sup>th</sup> SAC meeting, considering its relevance for both small and large scale fisheries and in terms of bycatch reduction, the Project will support joint discussion on fishing technology. The discussion will be influential in: i) providing an overview of knowledge on fishing gears in use in the MedSudMed area and of their main characteristics, and ii) establishing the basis for the preparation of a review document on fishing gears in the Mediterranean Sea. An agenda item of the MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources will be devoted to this issue.

- Joint discussion on small scale fisheries

In response to the request received during 2013, taking into consideration the 16<sup>th</sup> SAC work plan and its relevance at national and regional level, the Project will promote joint discussion on small-scale fisheries (SSF). The discussion will focus on the current knowledge and state of SSF in MedSudMed countries and on SSF exploitation dynamics and interaction with other fisheries. An agenda item of the MedSudMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources will be devoted to this issue.

- 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 2014. During the meeting attention will be paid to:

- identifying priorities and plan common or joint research activities;
- fostering cooperative discussion on fishing technology for the preparation of a review document on fishing gears in the Mediterranean Sea;
- facilitating discussion on small scale fisheries to review current knowledge and exploitation dynamics at national and sub-regional level;
- continuing supporting the appraisal of the stock status of *Parapenaeus longirostris* and *Merluccius merluccius* and move forward in the stock assessment of *Mullus surmuletus*;
- continuing discussion on the integration of socio-economic data in the appraisal of fisheries status;
- the harmonisation of fisheries management in the south-central Mediterranean Sea.

## **b) Small pelagic fisheries resources**

- Finalisation of reports for MedSudMed cooperative oceanographic surveys

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 (summer 2010). Progress will be made in the finalisation of the reports of surveys carried out in Libyan waters in 2008 and drafts of 2010 surveys report will be prepared. As for previous surveys (i.e. 2006, 2008) the report will include a synthesis of ichthyoplankton and acoustic data gathered, a description of the concentration and retention areas for all ontogenetic stages of small pelagics and a description of the main oceanographic features of the area surveyed will be produced. In this respect, the sharing of information and data will be supported, as well as technical discussion on the contents and structure of the survey report. An agenda item of the MedSudMed Working Group on Small Pelagics (WG-SP) 2014 will be devoted to this topic.

- intercalibration for 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 surveys at sea and survey data processing for such species. As follow up to the discussion held during the WG-SP (FAO HQs, January 2013 and March 2014), an inter-calibration exercise at sea for acoustic surveys between the Tunisian R/V Hannibal and the Italian R/V Dallaporta is being organised. The survey period (June 2014), the sampling area (GSA 13) and the protocol to be followed in the work at sea were identified and agreed on by national experts. MedSudMed will also support the joint processing data collected during the survey. This latter activity could be carried out during the MedSudMed Working Group on small pelagic fisheries resources.

- Identification of shared stocks

The Project will continue to support the activities that aim at the identification of possible shared stocks of pelagic fish species in the south-central Mediterranean Sea. As follow up to the discussion held during the MedSudMed Working Group on Small Pelagic Fisheries Resources (WG-SP, FAO HQs, March 2014 – CC/12/Info 08), 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. In this view, the Project will continue coordinating *ad hoc* sampling of sardine and anchovy to confirm and further expand the results obtained in previous national studies on morphometry (body and otolith), microchemistry composition of the otoliths (bulk and surface analysis), tropho-dynamic, genetic comparison.

- Study Group on the joint processing of acoustic and ichthyoplankton data

The Project will continue to support participating countries in the process of data sharing and joint processing. 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) and adults of small pelagic fish in



different areas of the south-central Mediterranean Sea. The MedSudMed WG-SP (FAO HQs, March 2014) initiated the joint processing of such data to produce a preliminary description of the distribution and abundance of different life stages of small pelagics. To further continue the process and consolidate the results achieved, the WG-SP deemed the organisation of a Study Group necessary to: i) complete the standardisation of fish biomass estimation (starting from the acoustic signal and the catch gathered during the survey) based on existing data; and ii) continue the joint processing of existing ichthyoplankton and acoustic data to define spawning areas and areas of concentration of larvae. The achievements of the Study Group. The SG will be tentatively organized in the first half of 2014.

- Working Group on small pelagic fisheries resources

The annual MedSudMed Working Group on Small Pelagic Fishery Resources (WG-SP) is tentatively planned to take place in the second semester of 2014. According to the conclusions of the previous meetings (FAO HQs, March 2014), the WG-SP will aim to:

- Review the work carried out by the Study Group on the joint processing of acoustic and ichthyoplankton data;
- continue the joint processing of historic and newly acquired data (e.g. data from the inter-ship comparison);
- define priorities to be addressed to progress in the monitoring and appraisal of the state of small pelagic fish and fisheries;
- progress in the planning of joint surveys at sea to be carried out in the medium term.

### **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 the full involvement of all the research institutes and scientists from the participating countries in the activities organised as a priority. 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. inter-ship comparison for acoustic surveys) and data processing;
- Trainings on statistical processing of data for stock assessment and population dynamics (e.g. on the software environment for statistical analyses “R”, and the related use of the Fisheries Library developed in R, FLR) in collaboration with the FAO AdriaMed Project.
- Specific training activities (e.g. on basic biology data gathering and interpretation) could be jointly organised with the other FAO Mediterranean Projects;

- Workshop/training on fisheries socio-economic data collection, in cooperation with CopeMed II and taking advantage of the work-plan adopted by the GFCM Subcommittee on Social and Economic Sciences;
- Training on the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries for the development of fisheries management plan for experts and national administrations, in cooperation with the FAO Project MedSea-LME.

The organisation of *ad hoc* training programmes upon request of the participating institutes can be foreseen. Training activities, when possible, 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](http://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 *MedSudMed Technical Documents No. 30* and the *MedSudMed Technical Document No. 31*<sup>2</sup> to be published.

#### **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 will continue and further collaboration with CopeMed II, and EastMed will be sought. In this context, the indications provided during the internal coordination meetings among Projects 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 Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem - MedSea LME Project<sup>3</sup>, In particular, synergies will be sought with:

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<sup>2</sup> - MedSudMed 2010. MedSudMed Report of the MedSudMed-08 Oceanographic Survey Strait of Sicily, Libyan continental shelf 15 – 31 August 2008 GCP/RER/ITA/MSM-TD-30. *MedSudMed Technical Documents No 30*.

- MedSudMed 2010. Report of the MedSudMed Libya 2008 Acoustic Survey. Libyan continental shelf (14 August – 07 September 2008) GCP/RER/ITA/MSM-TD-31. *MedSudMed Technical Documents No 31*.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

- CopeMed II, in the implementation of the activities foreseen in the second phase of the MedSeaLME Project, finalized to the reduction of bycatch of the bottom trawl fisheries in the Gulf of Gabès, Tunisia (GSAs 13 and 14).
- AdriaMed, in the organisation of a training workshop to improve capacity of national fisheries administrations in the implementation of the EAF principles will be foreseen for the first half of 2014. The activity is embedded in the second phase of the MedSea-LME Project.

Synergies with other international institutions and 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.

As already stated, training activities will be coordinated among all the Projects, in order to avoid 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, in particular for the forthcoming 31<sup>st</sup> session of the FAO Committee of Fisheries (June 2014). 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 (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, development of databases for fishery-independent data and coordinating activities.

#### **f) Strengthening the cooperation with the 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 GFCM and its subsidiary bodies, (SAC, SubCommittees, Working Groups) supporting: i) the preparation of scientific contributions for GFCM events; ii) the participation of experts from the Project's participating institutes in GFCM events; and iii) countries to be compliant with the GFCM requests. Moreover the Project will act in synergy with, and will be part of, the 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.