



All the Recreational Fisheries Members of the MEDAC CONTRIBUTION TO THE HIGH LEVEL SEMINAR

Scientists say that the main challenge in the Mediterranean is to reduce catches at least around 50% and to increase selectivity to achieve sustainable levels, but this is not the only challenge.

It is our opinion that inshore ecosystems have been completely unheeded in fisheries management. Fisheries management lacks of an ecological perspective. The ecology of inshore ecosystems must be understood and taken into account when defining management and technical measures. And currently, this does not happen.

Coastal waters, in particular inshore waters, are the permanent or occasional habitat of many of the most valued species in the Mediterranean. If we do not understand what is happening there, how species interact, who, when and to what extent is targeting them, how can we expect to have appropriate management measures and healthy seas?

So, addressing an appropriate management and knowledge of inshore waters is, in our opinion, paramount for achieving a healthy Mediterranean. And for this it is essential to integrate all stakeholders. Recreational fisheries have been completely ignored and they still are. They should be included in coastal waters management plans and recognized a stakeholder of full rights. If we take a look at what Mediterranean Regulation and CFP (Common Fisheries Policy) say about recreational fisheries we read this: *“It is necessary to ensure that they are carried out in a manner that does not significantly interfere with commercial fisheries.”*

This is totally unacceptable! Fisheries resources are a common good while regulations give priority to their commercial exploitation over any other users' interest.

Talking about recreational fisheries just as a leisure activity that may be replaced by any other is a simplistic view. In addition to the multiple social benefits provided by recreational fisheries and fully reported in scientific literature we must add a fully developed industry linked to the activity that has the same rights to live out of fishery resources as commercial fisheries have. The challenge for managers is now to integrate both, commercial and recreational, into effective managing plans developed together.

Control enforcement is paramount, too. MS invest money in control which is often ineffective. Control measures need to be rationalised to make it more effective with the same economic resources. An easy way is to control the supply chain, from the port to the market and restaurants too.

Our collective is the only one, different from eNGOs, that can provide an opinion that may differ from commercials, and this is very important. How can scientists and managers be aware about what is really happening in coastal waters ecosystems if they only hear one part of the story?

On the other hand we have the way that recreational fisheries are being managed. Managers are completely unaware (we can't say whether deliberately or not) of existing managing alternatives provided by recreational fisheries science. It seems that they only learnt two measures, or completely allowance or banning the activity. This specially occurs in MPAs. Recreational fisheries are mainly banned without any assessment on their impact while small-scale fisheries is allowed again without any assessment on their impact. It is completely unfair and this creates discontent within our collective.

The recreational fishing community has a lot of knowledgeable people but most are volunteers. To engage those people in the work of the Advisory Councils and GFCM work – which is very time consuming – more funding is needed. The recreational fishing community should have better access to EU funding to be able to help improve data collection and fisheries management in the Med Sea area. Funding is needed to engage people in advise making as well as conducting surveys, to arrange and attend events and meetings relevant for fisheries management and decision makers. Recreational sea fishing is poorly organised – and/or poor in monetary and manpower terms - in some EU and non-EU countries in the Med Sea area

These are some of the urgent measures that should be taken regarding recreational fisheries:

- They should be recognized in fishing and marine regulations as full-rights stakeholders.
- Specific coastal and inshore waters management plans should be developed and recreational fisheries should be included.
- RF impact and socio economic value should be assessed without prejudice.
- Fishing regulation mainly in terms of bag limits and gears allowed should be revised both at MS and EU level (where common rules apply).

Finally, and in order to better understand recreational fisheries in the Mediterranean, we want to stress the need to take into account the work that is being done during the last years and the opinions provided by the MEDAC Working Group on Recreational Fisheries.

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