



MANTIS: Marine protected Areas Network Towards Sustainable fisheries in the Central Mediterranean

Report of the Strait of Sicily stakeholders meeting-Porto Palo

Porto Palo

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Meeting objectives

The third "stakeholder meeting" of the Mantis project for the Sicilian Channel was held in Porto Palo di Capopassero, on 21 July 2018. The meeting organized by CNR-Mazara del Vallo and WWF, was hosted at the headquarters of the municipality of Porto Palo, and saw the participation of about 30 people, including the Mayor of Porto Palo, representatives of the local and regional administration, a representative of FAO Adriamed and the fishermen of the local Cogepa.

The objective of the meeting was to present to stakeholders the results of simulations of different scenarios of fishery management in the Strait of Sicily (SoS) carried out within the Mantis project under the coordination of Tommaso Russo (University of Tor Vergata), and to collect the indications and opinions of local fishermen about these results.

Following the introductions by the Mayor of Porto Palo and the representatives of the local and regional administration and of the president of Cogepa, the project coordinator Fabio Fiorentino presents the picture of the fishing situation in the Sicilian Channel in which the project is contextualized. Although to date the policies of the European Commission to cope with the over-exploitation of fish stocks in the Mediterranean have been based on the reduction of effort and fishing capacity, new EU policies are increasingly directed towards spatial management of fishing. In the Sicilian Channel, according to the latest recommendation of the GFCM, three fishery restricted areas (FRA) have been identified and established to protect the juvenile stages of the target species. Preliminary studies have shown that the closure of some parts of sea with important habitats for the juvenile stages of the deep water rose shrimp (DPRS) can lead to a reduction in fishing mortality equal to the one which would be obtained by reducing the fishing effort by 10%. The Mantis project aims to evaluate how spatial management of fishing can contribute to achieving the goals of maximum sustainable yield (MSY) of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in the Sicilian Channel and in the Adriatic.

Presentation of the project results - Tommaso Russo

T. Russo presents the simulations of three management scenarios for fishing in the Sicilian Channel, and the effects of each scenario on the stocks of 4 target species (hake, red mullet, DPRS and red shrimp) and on fleet revenues. Since the stocks of hake and shrimps are shared throughout the Sicilian Channel, the results presented concern the entire Italian fleet operating in the Channel.

The scenarios tested are:

1. Status quo
2. Closure of all the protection areas already designated / existing in the SoS for 1 year
3. Closure of the 3 GFCM FRAs
4. Application of the measures envisaged by the GSA16 management plan of demersal resources, namely: reduction of 8% of the fleet in 2018 and reduction of effort (fishing days) of 5% in 2019, and a further 5% reduction in 2020

For each simulation and for each species the effects are shown on: dislocation of fishing effort, fishing mortality (F) by species, fishing costs and revenues

Scenarios 2 and 3: fishing effort increases up to twice in the regions to the south and north-west of the SoS. Revenues do not vary significantly. Effects on:



- Mullet: Strong reduction of F and strong increase of spawning stock biomass (SSB).

- Shrimps: slight increase in F on juveniles (age group 0-1 year), strong increase of F on large individuals. Little effect on SSB.

- Hake: slight increase in F on juveniles (age group 0-1 year), strong increase of F on large individuals. SSB shows a trend of recovery with an increase in SSB evident from year 4, due to the slow life cycle of this species.

Scenario 4: involves little dislocation of the effort, but a strong reduction in revenues. It is the most effective scenario for the recovery of stocks, with a strong increase in SSB for shrimp and hake.

F. Fiorentino underlines how from these preliminary results, the FRAs, as currently identified, are of low efficacy for the protection of fish stocks. The most effective measure always turns out to be the reduction of effort and fishing capacity, which, however, involves a sharp reduction in revenues. In light of these results it is important to understand how to optimize these areas, identifying the most optimal periods for the closure and the possible variation of the extension of the areas themselves, to maximize the effect on resources and revenues. Adjusting the effort in space has a lower economic impact on fishing than fleet demolition.

He also underlines the importance of greater availability of data and regular monitoring: only with a more accurate description of the distribution of fishing effort, species and productivity, it is indeed possible to improve predictions.

Open discussion

Faced with the proposals of the management scenarios the fishermen complain about the too high costs, the too restrictive measures, the too high fines and in general show distrust in the EU objectives on fishing.

- Fiorentino: recalls how necessary it is to recognize that fishing is in crisis, and how the goal can no longer be "more" fishing, but rather to fish less and sell better. The aim of the project is to understand what results and effects can be expected from the application of European regulations. It is no longer conceivable to fish without rules. African fishing reflects the Italian one hundreds of years ago, completely devoid of rules. The mazara fishers have had to abandon entire fishing areas due to the intensity of Egyptian fishing. It is urgent that the fishermen themselves put forward proposals, otherwise, faced with this state of crisis, the EU solution will always be the same: reduction of effort and fishing capacity. It is necessary to act on the market and improve the sale of the product, selling it directly to the consumer as already happens in other areas of Italy and abroad.
- Pino Quattrocchi: shows himself opposed to the closure of the FRA throughout the year, suggests following the seasonality of the species and the reproductive periods. The technical ban, after the first year of application in which it had positive results, failed. He suggests 2-month compensated bans. It clarifies that a 2-month reimbursed ban is technically possible, but reimbursements must be given in quick times.
- Fiorentino: remember that everyone's goal must be to maintain productive fishing without subsidies. The payed ban is a transitory measure to be used until fishing becomes autonomous and the compensation is no longer necessary. He reiterates that an appropriate ban is one that protects fish that recruit in the summer (mullet, sparidae). The results of the ban are positive, but it is necessary to adjust the fishing activity after the ban, to avoid the saturation of the market in the period immediately following the arrest. A governance of the category is needed to control these mechanisms and regulate the market.
- Fishermen's proposal: 2-month fishing ban with effort adjustment after the ban with 2 work days, Monday and Thursday, following the example of the Adriatic. Fishermen agree on the need to regulate the market and sell better.



- President Cogepa: remembers that the abn should be extended to all the fleets that affect the same stock, not just the Sicilian one.
- Fishermen: they claim that if exploited in the right way some areas produce much better than when they are left to rest (they take the example of the “fossata” area, exploited for 40 years by Portopalese and Bari fishers with high productions. Since the abandonment of the Bari fishers the area has been populated with smoothounds , stingrays and “spaghetti”). A similar example is put forward for the Banco di Ur, in Malta, a highly productive area for mullet in the 80s and 90s, also exploited by the Italians, who died following the establishment of the exclusive Maltese area due to the fixed anchorages of 50 ships , which destroy the seabed with movements due to the wind and pollute with the paint.
- The fishermen remember that if the FRAs are implemented, they will further exploit the northern limit, in the 3 to 20 mile range. They will not go to the southern limit, too far.
- Researchers proposal: full trawling bans will be simulated for 2 months, in different periods for the different species.
- Fishermen: they complain about the lack of dialogue with the ministry and between sectors (fishing, research, harbor management and the ministry itself). Example of this disintegration is the failure of the portopalo category proposal for an absolute ban on fishing extended to the entire fleet, regardless of the size of the boat, for the same period of time. The proposal remained unheard and the 2018 fishing bans are asynchronized. In addition, payments for 2015 bans have begun only now.
- Tommaso Russo: remembers the two main problems of fishing in the Mediterranean. The first is overfishing, whose damage has not yet been resolved, also due to mismanagement Overfishing is the origin of the problem, which should not be confused with bad management. Also remembers that the Mediterranean is a frontier sea and that Italian fishing has changed much less than that of other countries in the last 20 years. The second problem is illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU): marine resources belong to everyone, control over everyone is therefore necessary. We must not abandon the strong controls already in existence, but we must extend them to everyone. He also notes that spatial management is at no cost to the state, as in the Adriatic, and has the lowest cost for fishermen. The researchers want to find a solution together with the fishermen and for this they discuss the effectiveness of the closure of 3 areas (very small compared to the real distribution of the species). If solutions of this type are not proposed together, the European Commission's solution will always be the same, the reduction of effort and fishing capacity, with the greatest costs for the sector.
- Enrico Arneri, FAO Adriamed: informs about the ongoing collaboration with Tunisian and Egyptian researchers and fishermen and underlines how having the boat fishing tracks is the only solution to manage the sea correctly. Through the VMS it is in fact possible to quantify the activity of all and sit at a discussion table with transparent data. Tunisians are adopting the VMS and closing the Gulf of Gabes to fishing during the 3 summer months. Greece closes trawling for 3 summer months. These measures are widespread throughout the Mediterranean, and it is only with the VMS that it is possible to ensure that everyone respects fishing stops. Thanks to VMS and AIS, and to the subdivision of the sea into subareas for management purposes, it is possible to know the number of sets per month per subarea. Each fishing port could propose how many sets to carry out per subarea, without completely stopping the activity in the whole fishing area. All this is possible with today's systems of spatial measurements and with more detailed and truthful catch declarations (necessary logbooks that show the catches, not just the number of days). If researchers and fishermen work together, with adequate data, it will be possible to identify the acceptable level of exploitation for each fishing area, dosing the fishing effort by area. To do this and ensure proper management, the bluebox information is essential.



- Fishermen: they agree on the usefulness of the AIS but complain about the difficulties and penalties to which they are subjected when the instrument does not work.

The meeting ends with the commitment of the researchers to test the new proposals received and with the thanks of the Mayor for the open and fruitful discussion.

Summary of proposals and collected information

- 2-month fishing ban, at different times for different species, with effort adjustment after the ban (2 working days, Monday and Thursday)
- market regulation after the ban to improve the sale of the fish
- faced with an implementation of the FRAs, the fleet will further exploit the northern limit, in the range of 3 to 20 miles. It will not go to the southern limit, too far





Porto Palo di Capo Passero
21 luglio 2018

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CONVEGNO



Il progetto Europeo MANTIS:

“le aree marine gestite come strumento per migliorare la pesca nello Stretto di Sicilia”.



Programma dei lavori:

- Saluti delle Autorità
- Introduzione al convegno di Lorenzo Taccone (CO.GE.PA. Capo Passero - Siracusa)
- Relazione del Dott. Fabio Fiorentino (CNR-IAMC di Mazara del vallo)



AULA CONSILIARE DEL COMUNE DI

PORTOPALO DI CAPO PASSERO

21 LUGLIO 2018 - ORE 18.00