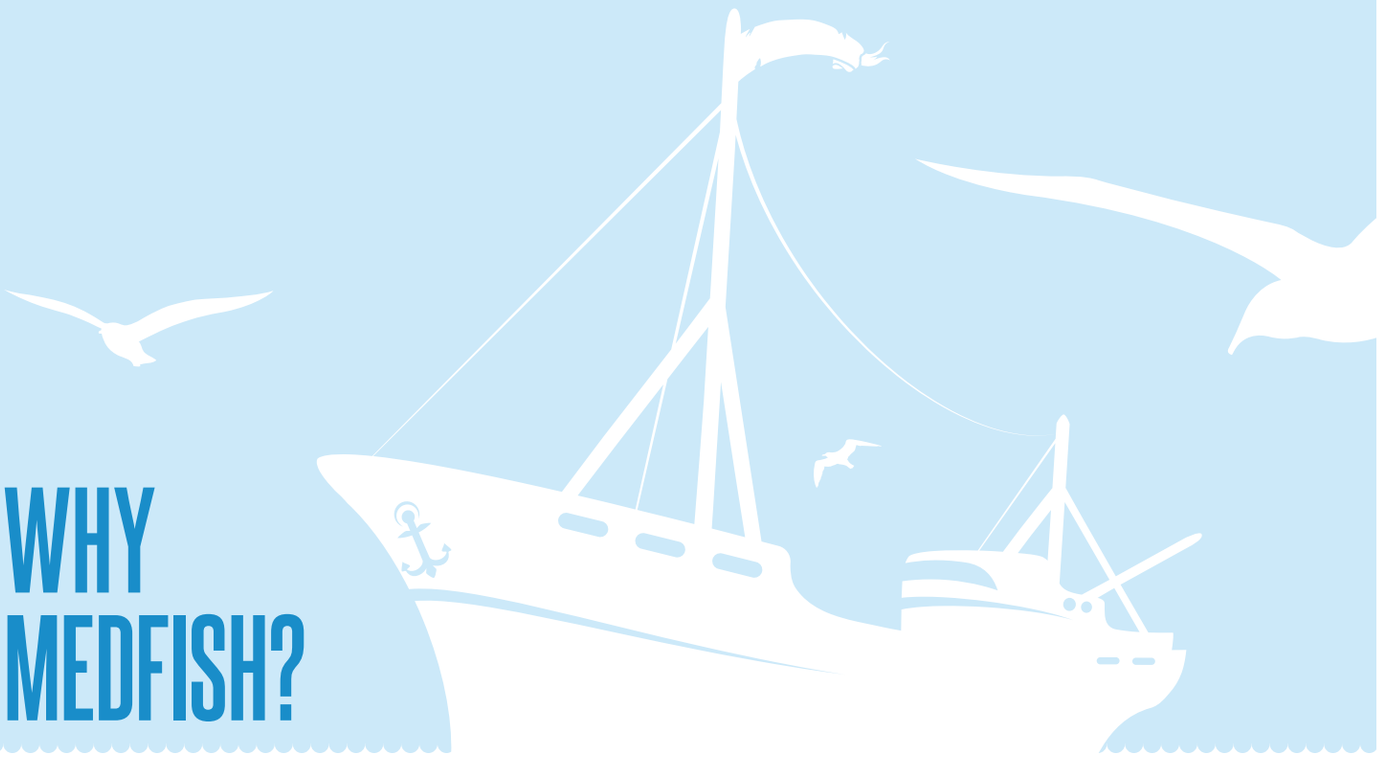
Medfish impacts report 2018

Working towards sustainable Mediterranean fisheries



WHY MEDFISH?

According to the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) 'The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries' report (2016), 85% of assessed fish stocks in this region are fished at biologically unsustainable levels. The Mediterranean is home to many small-scale fisheries, some of which catch multiple species with a variety of different gears on the same trip. These fisheries often lack accurate data and the organization to ensure efficient management.

To tackle these challenges, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and the World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF) jointly launched the Medfish project in September 2015. The project's aim was to carry out a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of French and Spanish Mediterranean fisheries using the MSC Fisheries Standard as a benchmark for sustainability. This was the first time that such an approach was tested in the Mediterranean, allowing an independent evaluation of Mediterranean fisheries' sustainability performances.

WWF

WWF is one of the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organizations. To help fisheries that want to improve their sustainability and seafood buyers who want more sustainable sourcing, WWF engages in Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs). The ultimate goal of a FIP is to create measurable change and ensure the long-term sustainability of a fishery.

Marine Stewardship Council

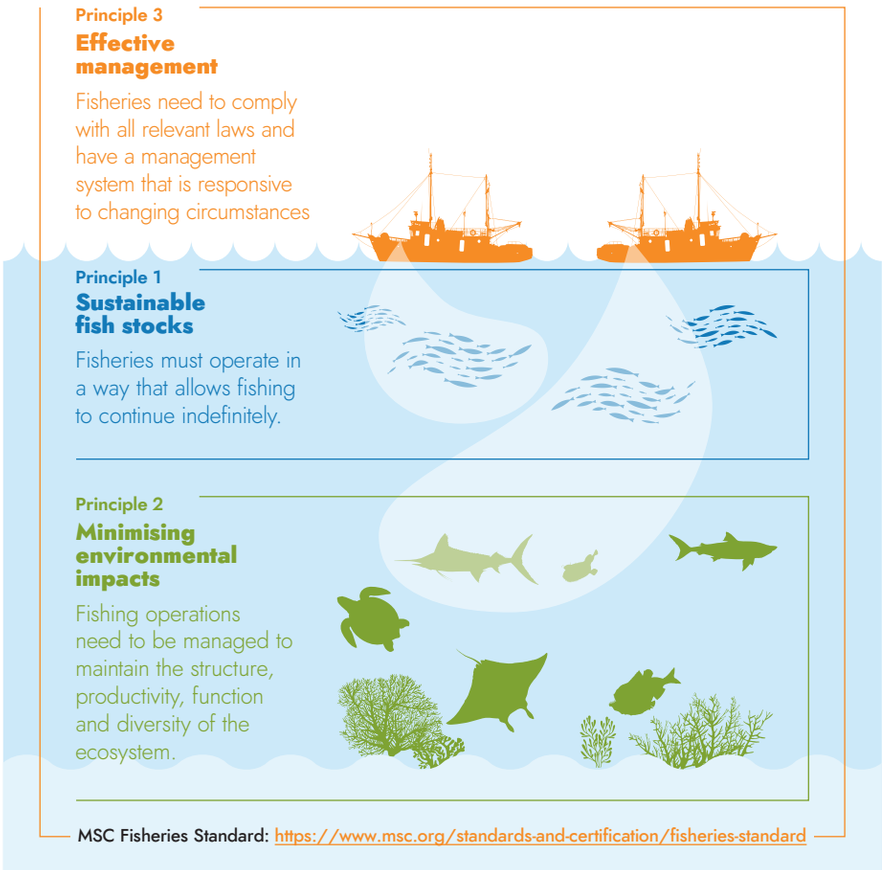
The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is an international non-profit organization and has been part of a 20-year team effort to keep oceans full of life and recognize sustainable fisheries. Sustainable fishing means leaving enough fish in the ocean, respecting habitats and ensuring people who depend on fishing can maintain their livelihoods.

THE MSC FISHERIES STANDARD

A measure of sustainability

The MSC Fisheries Standard is used to assess whether a fishery is sustainable and well-managed. It incorporates the most up-to-date and internationally recognized fisheries science and management best practice. The Standard's requirements are revised and developed in consultation with scientists, representatives of the fishing industry and NGOs. The MSC Fisheries Standard has three core principles that every fishery must meet:

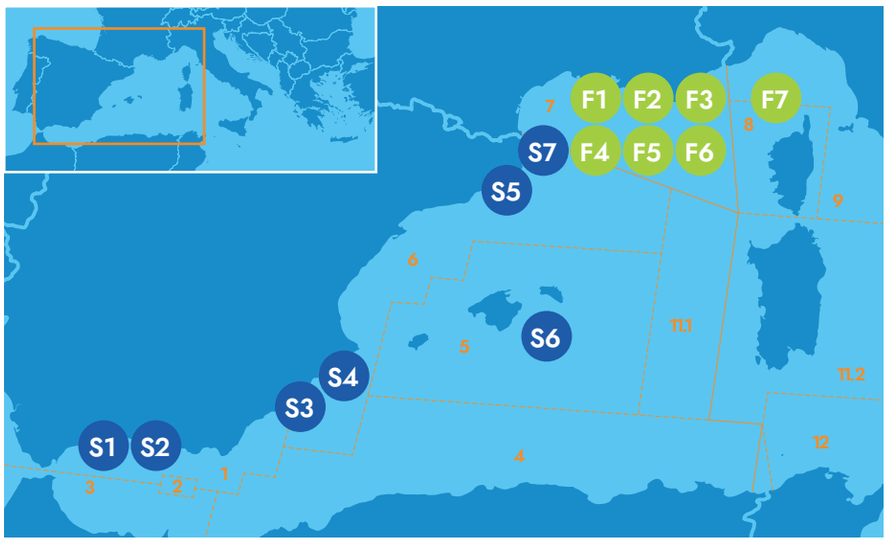
The 3 Principles of MSC



To be certified as sustainable, a fishery needs to be independently assessed and score highly against the MSC Fisheries Standard. The MSC process also includes an optional stage: pre-assessment. Pre-assessment identifies potential challenges for certification and allows for a preliminary diagnosis of a fishery's sustainability. It should be noted that a pre-assessment does not go into the level of detail and scrutiny undertaken in a full MSC assessment.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In two years, the Medfish project has successfully identified all the fisheries operating in the French and Spanish Mediterranean Sea. This has led to an improved understanding of 50 fisheries in each country. The project has pre-assessed and defined action plans for improvements for 7 fisheries per country, using the MSC standard and criteria as a tool. The project will continue until 2020 and include further analysis and work on the implementation of action plans.



French fisheries

F1, Gulf of Lion hake trawl fishery (France)
GSA 7 (Gulf of Lion)

F2, Gulf of Lion octopus pot and Portuguese trap fishery
GSA 7 (Gulf of Lion)

F3, Gulf of Lion mutable dog whelk trap fishery
GSA 7 (Gulf of Lion)

F4, Gulf of Lion sardine purse seine and beach seine fishery
GSA 7 (Gulf of Lion)

F5, Gulf of Lion wedge clam hand dredge fishery
GSA 7 (Gulf of Lion)

F6, Gulf of Lion sea bass and gilthead sea bream gillnet fishery
GSA 7 (Gulf of Lion)

F7, Corsica common dentex longline fishery
GSA 8 (Corsica Island)

Spanish fisheries

S1, Caleta de Vélez and other ports anchovy purse seine fishery
GSA 1 (Northern Alboran Sea)

S2, Motril and other ports striped soldier shrimp trap fishery
GSA 1 (Northern Alboran Sea)

S3, Mar Menor caramote prawn trap fishery
GSA 1 (Northern Alboran Sea)

S4, Villajoyosa, Santa Pola and other ports red mullet trawl fishery
GSA 6 (Northern Spain)

S5, Palamos red shrimp trawl fishery
GSA 6 (Northern Spain)

S6, Balearic Islands transparent goby seine fishery
GSA 5 (Balearic Island)

S7, Gulf of Lion hake trawl fishery (Spain)
GSA 7, (Gulf of Lion)

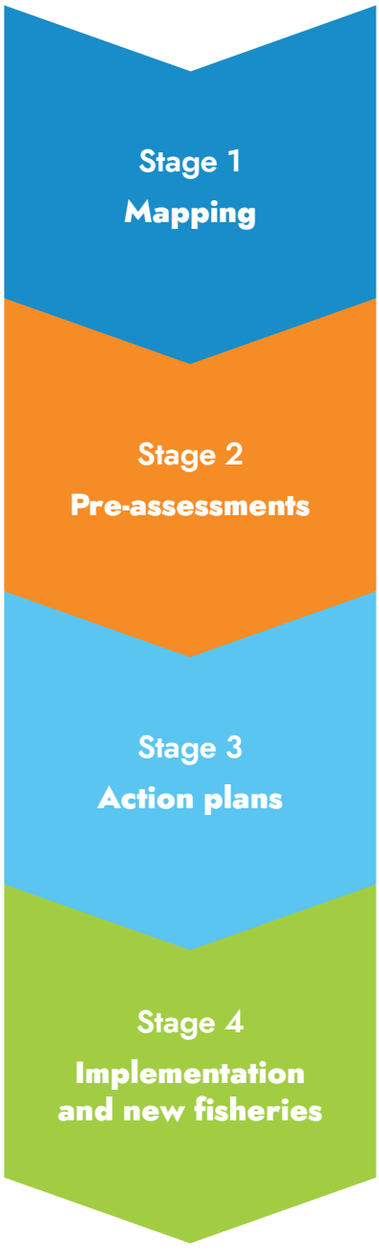
Distribution of the Medfish project fisheries on the Mediterranean façade. The Medfish project focuses on French and Spanish fisheries operating within General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Geographical Sub-Areas (GSA).

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

The Medfish project is focused on Spanish and French fisheries in the Mediterranean. The project uses a collaborative bottom-up approach, empowering fishers and managers to make the improvements necessary to ensure long-lasting fishing activities.

Project's stages

- Stage 1 & 2: carried out by independent accredited certification bodies.
- Stage 3: carried out by WWF & external consultants with the assistance of MSC and the collaboration of all stakeholders.
- Stage 4: carried out by MSC & WWF with the collaboration of all stakeholders for implementation. The 3 new fisheries will follow the same process as stage 2 and 3.



Sep 2015

Listing of all the existing French and Spanish Mediterranean fisheries and Mapping of 50 fisheries in each country: thorough description and analysis of fisheries' fishing gears, catch compositions, related stock status, interactions with vulnerable species, impacts on habitats, and the management system.

Analysis of the 14 fisheries' sustainability (7 in each country) using pre-assessments (PAs) against MSC criteria.

Elaboration of action plans (APs) for improvements with relevant stakeholders.

Apr 2018

Implementation of some action plans and add 3 new fisheries per country to carry out PAs and elaborate APs.

Apr 2020

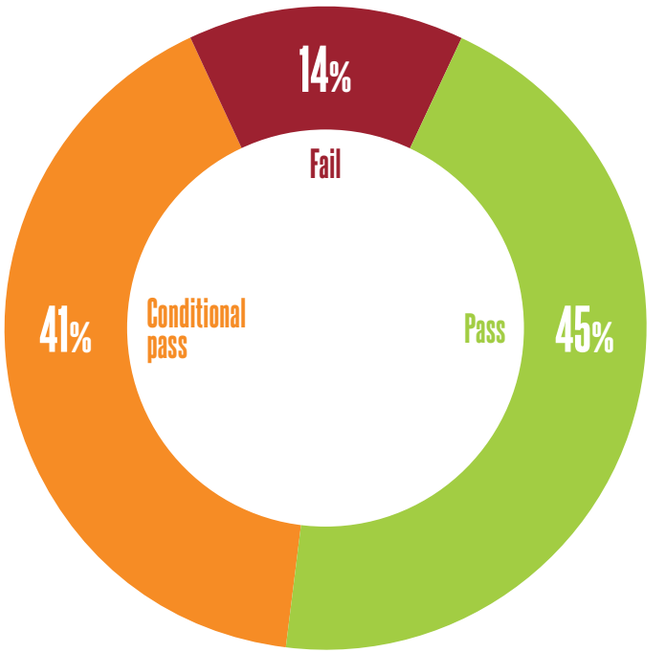
METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

14 Fisheries pre-assessed against the MSC Fisheries Standard

What was done? Following the mapping of 50 fisheries in the French and Spanish Mediterranean, 14 fisheries representing the great diversity (scale, gear, management, target species, location, etc.) were selected to undertake a gap analysis against the MSC Fisheries Standard.

This gap analysis allows for each fishery to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their sustainability performances, using the MSC's 28 performance indicators (PIs) for sustainable fishing.

Who was involved? Two MSC approved assessment bodies (SAI Global and Acoura Marine).



Fail

Information suggests a fishery is unlikely to meet the minimum acceptable score for a given MSC performance indicator.

Conditional pass

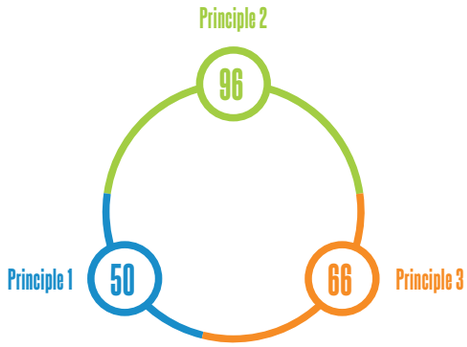
Information suggests a fishery will reach the minimum acceptable score for a given performance indicator but may not meet the level of best practice. A condition for improvement may be needed.

Pass

Information suggests a fishery is likely to reach at least the MSC best practice scoring level for a given performance indicator.

Percentage of MSC performance indicators by scoring level (percentage of the total number of PIs for the 14 fisheries that received a "fail", "conditional pass" or "pass" scoring level in the pre-assessments - PAs)

More than half of the 14 fisheries' total performance indicators need improvements to reach the MSC level. Most of the improvements needed are on Principles 2 and 3. The most common weaknesses identified are presented below.



Principle 1

- Poor state of target species' stocks
- Need for more effective harvest strategies
- Absence of explicit harvest control rules (HCRs)

Principle 2

- Poor state of non-target species' stocks
- Need for more information on fisheries impacts on other species, habitats and the general ecosystem

Principle 3

- Inadequate specific objectives linked to maximum sustainable yield (MSY)
- Insufficient or unclear decision-making processes
- Need for effective evaluations of management performance.

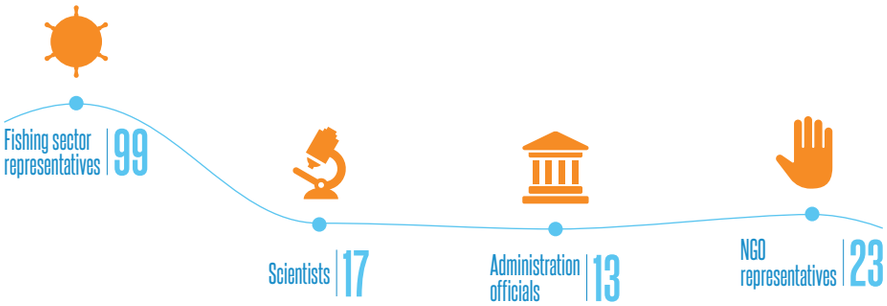
Transversal weakness: data availability and reliability

Aggregated number of indicators in need for improvement ("fail" or "conditional pass" scoring levels) per MSC Principle across 14 pre-assessed fisheries.

13 Participatory workshops to define action plans for improvement

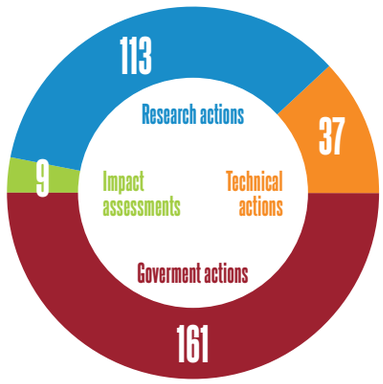
What was done? 13 multi-stakeholder workshops (9 in Spain and 4 in France) were held in order to develop action plans able to address the weaknesses identified for the fisheries pre-assessed. Through a participatory approach, fishery stakeholders (fishers, scientists, administrations and NGOs) discussed and defined actions for improvement for each MSC indicator with a scoring level of "fail" or "conditional pass". 13 fisheries over the 14 are now equipped with roadmaps toward sustainability to prioritize key actions to implement.

Who was involved? Project partners, external consultants and fishery stakeholders.



Distribution of 152 total participants to the 13 workshops in Spain and France by stakeholder's sector.

13 Action plans for improvement defined



What was done? Based on the actions defined in the workshops, 13 action plans linked to MSC performance indicators were developed. The action plans address weaknesses identified in pre-assessments and were developed collectively with all the stakeholders interested in the project fisheries. The action plans act as springboard for fishers and managers, jointly with targeted partners, to take the lead on implementation.

Who was involved? A consultant with MSC expertise, with support from WWF and MSC, and the collaboration of the stakeholders (fishery, NGOs, administration, scientists).

Research actions		
Data collection, analysis and reporting	49	
Knowledge review/gap analysis	19	
Quantitative stock assessments and reference points development	17	
Gear and fishing practices research	8	
Ecological and trophic analysis	5	
Habitat and fishing areas mapping	4	
Scientific advice	4	
Alternative and/or innovative stock assessment methodologies usage	3	
Socio-economic research	2	
Improve technical assistance	1	
Testing projects	1	
Total	**113**	**35%**

Technical actions		
Data collection protocols and software	20	
Spatial and seasonal closures	7	
Gear modification/selectivity/restrictions	5	
Avoidance and releasing procedures	2	
Encounter protocols	1	
Licensing restrictions	1	
Minimum size	1	
Total	**37**	**12%**

Impact assessments		
Impact assessment of fishing activity	6	
Analysis of spatial and temporal distribution of fishing effort	2	
Interactions with Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs)	1	
Total	**9**	**3%**

Governance actions		
Management measures and tools development	32	
Formalising decision-making processes, transparency and information sharing	30	
Management plan monitoring and evaluation activities	22	
Management plan definition and improvement	20	
Scientific, technical and management seminars	19	
Fostering co-management and best practice	15	
Strengthening MCS systems	10	
Enforcement and compliance promotion	9	
Ensuring adequate funding for activities	4	
Total	**161**	**50%**

Over the 13 action plans completed, more than 300 improvement actions have been defined

Overall, we see a predominance of governance and research actions needed to improve the fisheries in the project, among which data collection and management measures are overarching. Data collection is needed in all categories concerning biology, stock assessments, interaction between fisheries and Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems, and catch declaration.

ROADMAPS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Benefits of action plan implementation

Many potential benefits can arise from the implementation of the action plans defined within the project. Those include:

- Framework for **strengthening collaboration** between different stakeholders
- **Reputational** advantages for fisheries
- Fostering **data collection** and **research** on stock assessment, gear modification, management tools, etc.
- Enabling **adequate protection** of fish stocks, Endangered, Threatened and Protected species (ETP) and Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs)
- Expansion and improvement of existing **management plans** and promotion of new ones
- Improved **compliance** within fisheries
- Development of partnerships with the **market** and potential access to new markets
- Creation of a positive long-term relationship with management decision makers
- Facilitation of access to bank loans

The Medfish Project fisheries represent a wide range of fisheries in terms of location, scale, target species, fishing gear and management framework. However, the project analysis emphasizes some **general needs** that could benefit to most of them:

- Improvement of quantitative **stock assessments** or implementation of alternative assessment methods which requires **better data collection** on catches, catch composition, biology…
- Improved **reporting on catches,** compliance with regulations, sales declaration…
- Development of biological and socio-economical **reference points** and management tools such as **harvest control rules** (HCR)
- Clarification of **target** and **bycatch species** ecological roles, fishing impacts on different component of the ecosystem and the influence of other environmental factors
- Implementation of effective and specific **management plans** that seek to achieve Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)
- Ensuring **transparency** in decision-making processes

Collective work will be key in implementing action plans and working towards sustainability.

Catalysing implementation through partnerships and Fisheries Improvement Projects (FIPs)

To support and facilitate the implementation of the improvement actions described, the Medfish project encourages **collaboration** between **fisheries, administrations, scientists, NGOs** and **market actors;** and the development of partnerships to tackle specific areas of improvements. The different resources provided by each partner can include funds, knowledge, skills and experience which, when pooled, can be used to support activities and side-projects that deliver fishery improvements. The relationships built can also play a valuable role in supporting fisheries interested in moving towards formal Fisheries Improvement Projects (FIPs) and ultimately to MSC certification.

A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

Project conclusions and next steps

Medfish has improved the understanding of the actions needed to reverse the situation of Mediterranean fisheries. Fish stocks targeted by the project's 14 fisheries are either in a poor state or have never undergone reliable scientific assessments. Information on the impact of the 14 fisheries on bycatch or marine habitats is also lacking. Finally, even where global management frameworks exist (CFP, stock assessments, data collection framework), the management of these fisheries is often too general and has lacked specific objectives. Lack of availability and reliability of data across several fields is the biggest block to fisheries' improvements.

Stage 3 of the project proposed measures and solutions to **overcome sustainability challenges. Stage 4,** which will run for two years, will see the **implementation** of those measures and enable the fisheries to **work towards sustainability.** The alignment of the Medfish project's objectives with the European Commission's ambitions for the Mediterranean Sea will hopefully foster further partnerships and fishery improvements.

In 2 years, the Medfish project has delivered sustainability diagnoses and roadmaps to equip Mediterranean fisheries on their path to sustainability. The contributions of stakeholders have been key in the process and the project intends to keep on working with interested fisheries in the implementation of improvements. Work will continue through the organization of workshops, both fishery-specific and transversal, to tackle the main weaknesses identified during the previous phases, brief stakeholders and identify synergies between organizations. New fisheries will undergo the sustainability diagnosis and action plan development phase, and capacity building training will be carried out to increase local capacity in the Mediterranean.

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The first project results also highlight how institutional and administration contribution is a valued tool for fisheries in this process, and we encourage further involvement from these sectors.

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The Medfish results have already inspired replication in other Mediterranean countries with the development of a similar approach in Italy, with the Blufish Project, and more projects will follow.

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All results and reports from the Project are publicly accessible and available for anyone to use for building fisheries sustainability projects: http://www.project-medfish.com/

WHO IS INVOLVED

MSC and WWF are working together to deliver this project

Marine Stewardship Council

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is an international non-profit organization. Its vision is for the world's oceans to be teeming with life, and seafood supplies safeguarded for this and future generations. The MSC label and certification program recognises and rewards sustainable fishing practices and is helping create a more sustainable seafood market.

WWF

WWF is one of the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organizations, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in more than 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

Advisory groups

In order to follow, support and advise the project, an advisory group has been created in each country. Each group is composed of fisheries, scientists, administration, market and NGO representatives.

Stakeholders involved

Cofradías, fishing committees, prud'homies, producer organisations, retailers, research institutes, central administration, regional administration and NGOs.

Funders

The project is made possible through the support of Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation, Adessium Foundation, MAVA Foundation, and the Sustainable Fisheries Fund program of Resources Legacy Fund.

Contact

If you would like to receive further information, we would love to hear from you at: medfish@msc.org

Visit us:

All the project full reports of each stage are accessible on our website: http://www.project-medfish.com/

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