



## PRESS RELEASE

### MEDITERRANEAN FISH STOCKS ON THE BRINK

On the eve of the High Level Seminar on Mediterranean Fish Stocks (Catania, 9-10 February 2016), organized by the European Commission (EC), MedReAct warns that Mediterranean stocks are running out of time. While a number of EU stocks in Northern Europe begin to show recovery signs, scientific advice on the Mediterranean paints a far bleaker picture. Despite success stories like the partial recovery of bluefin tuna, in the **Mediterranean stocks are largely overfished** and/or in a bad state, in particular stocks exploited mainly or exclusively by the EU fleets. According to the EC, of all stocks assessed in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas:

- ⇒ **96% of the EU stocks are overfished**, with an average ratio of current fishing three times higher than fishing at sustainable level. For stocks such as hake, red mullet, black bellied anglerfish and blue whiting, current fishing mortality rates have been more than six times higher than sustainability levels (MSY)<sup>1</sup>.
- ⇒ **91% of stocks shared with Third countries are exploited well above MSY**, with an average ratio of current fishing two times higher than fishing at MSY level.

Under the reformed EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), fishing limits must be set at sustainable/MSY levels no later than 2020. To comply with the CFP and stop overfishing, scientists are calling for the average reduction of fishing effort in the Mediterranean between 50% and 60%. However, even this may not be sufficient.

A new study<sup>2</sup> by Daniel Pauly and Dirk Zeller, from the Sea Around Us Project, “reconstructed” fish catch levels utilizing data missing from official sources, such as from recreational fisheries, discards, and illegal fishing, and found that between 1950 and 2010, **Mediterranean catches were 50% higher than reported** by FAO and are declining more strongly since the 1990s.

For some of the Mediterranean countries such as Italy, the study estimates that in the same time period *“the total catch was 2.6 times the data presented by FAO”* and that illegal unreported fishing represented 54% of all catches. For France, Mediterranean catches were calculated more than twice the official data, whereas for Greece the reconstructed catches were 57% larger than the nationally reported data for the same time period.







“This dramatic situation calls for immediate measures to combat illegal fishing, reduce fishing effort, introduce recovery plans for those species most at risk and close nursery and spawning areas to allow the sea to recover” said Domitilla Senni from MedReAct, an environmental organisation that promotes actions for the recovery of Mediterranean marine biodiversity.

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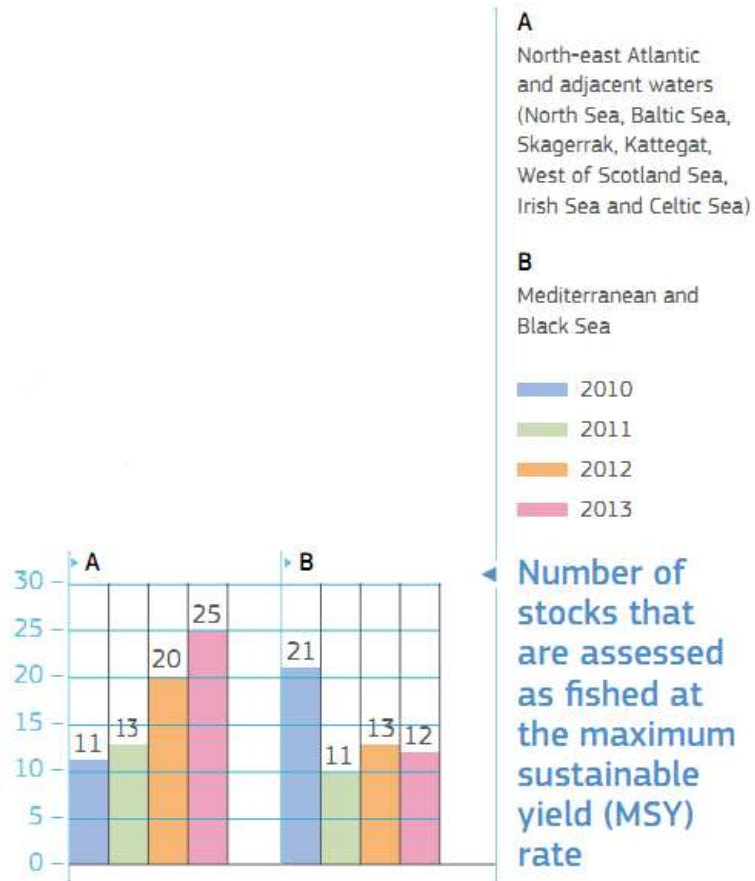
<sup>1</sup> Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) is the largest average yield, or catch, that can theoretically be taken from a species’ stock under constant environmental conditions without having an impact on the long-term stability of the population.

<sup>2</sup> Catch reconstructions reveal that global marine fisheries catches are higher than reported and declining. Daniel Pauly & Dirk Zeller. January 2016.

## State of commercial fish stocks in the Mediterranean EU waters

Species		Fishing area	Overfishing rate (F/Fmsy)	Reduction in fishing effort to stop overfishing (Fmsy)
Anchovies ( <i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i> )		Adriatic (GSA17-18)	2.1 (2013)	52%
Hake ( <i>Merluccius merluccius</i> )		Gulf of Lyon (GSA7)	9.8 (2013)	90%
		Southern Adriatic (GSA18)	5.3 (2012)	81%
		Northern Spain (GSA6)	9.9 (2013)	90%
Blue whiting ( <i>Micromesistius poutassou</i> )		Northern Spain (GSA6)	9.5 (2013)	89%
Striped red mullet ( <i>Mullus surmuletus</i> )		Malta and South of Sicily (GSA15-16)	4.1 (2012)	76%
Deep water pink shrimp ( <i>P. longirostris</i> )		Western Ionian (GSA19)	2.0 (2012)	49%
Sardine ( <i>Sardina pilchardus</i> )		Adriatic (GSA 17-18)	2.3 (2013)	57%

**Source:** Status of Mediterranean and Black Sea fish and shellfish stocks in European Waters in 2015. STEFC - European Commission.



**Source:** "Facts and figures of the Common Fisheries Policy" European Commission. 2014.

**Geographical areas (GSA):** <http://www.fao.org/>

**Country tables (Italy, Spain, France, Croatia):** [MedReAct - State of commercial fish stocks in the Mediterranean EU waters](#)