



**United Nations
Environment Programme
Mediterranean Action Plan**

Distr.: Limited
13 March 2025
Original: English

Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) Biodiversity and Fisheries

Athens, 7-8 April 2025

Agenda Item 7: Information on the EcAp related projects (SEMPA, EcAp Med PLUS, GEF Fish EBM Med, Marine litter Med II &PLUS).

Information note on the project "Fisheries and Ecosystem-Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean" (GEF-FishEBM Med project)

For environmental and cost-saving reasons, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.

Disclaimer:

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The Secretariat is also not responsible for the use that may be made of the information provided in the tables and maps of this report. Moreover, the maps serve for information purposes only and may not and shall not be construed as official maps representing maritime borders in accordance with international law.

Note by the Secretariat

1. This information note provides an overview of the project *"Fisheries and Ecosystem-Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean"* (FishEBM MED), funded by the GEF for the period 2023–2026. It also includes a summary of the project outputs that are relevant to the implementation of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) at both regional and national levels.:
 - a. Output 3.2 “Monitoring of good environmental status of Mediterranean ecosystems and biodiversity ensured, with established link to pollution impacts and sustainable use of marine ecosystem services” and
 - b. output 3.3 “ Measures identified to cope with the negative effects of non- indigenous species on biodiversity well as those of other potential stressors”.
2. This report is hereby presented to the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring Biodiversity and Fisheries for information.

“Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean” project (Fish EBM MED), funded by GEF

A. Project background

The Mediterranean Sea has been home to a diverse range of fisheries, including industrial, semi-industrial, and small-scale fisheries for thousands of years. These fisheries rely on a vast array of fishing gear to harvest a rich, multi-species marine environment abundant in biodiversity. Given that the Mediterranean is a semi-enclosed sea, shared fishing stocks are primarily exploited by the littoral states, making it crucial to have strong cooperation and coordination among them in developing and implementing measures to ensure sustainable management of these fisheries. Adopting a sound ecosystem-based management approach is essential to unlock the potential for stronger productivity in a sustainable manner.

With a budget of over \$7 million, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has endorsed the Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean (FishEBM MED) Project, which aims to reverse the over-exploitation of select commercial living marine resources. The project's objective is to enhance the capacity of Mediterranean countries to manage fisheries, including the use of ecosystem-based management tools, in their blue economy development pathway.

The beneficiary countries are the following: Countries: Mediterranean Sea riparian countries (Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia, Türkiye).

The project is implemented by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and UN Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) and Specially Protected Areas/Regional Activity Center (SPA/RAC), with oversight from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNEP as the GEF Implementing Agencies.

The project is being implemented through the following five components:

- **Component 1** – Strengthened capacity to manage commercial fisheries, with particular focus on SSF
- **Component 2** – Enhanced integration of emerging monitoring, control, and surveillance technologies in the fight against IUU fishing
- **Component 3** – Integrated ecosystem-based management tools and ecosystem approach to biodiversity protection and sustainable fisheries
- **Component 4** – Innovative blue economy solutions accounting for the fishery sector
- **Component 5** – Knowledge management and outscaling

B. Outputs

The Outputs are part of Component 3 “Integrated ecosystem based management tools and ecosystem approach to biodiversity protection and sustainable fisheries”. The outcome of this component aims to deliver healthier and more resilient marine ecosystems with more sustainable and hence long term productive fisheries in place, through the synergistic application of ecosystem-based conservation/ management tools to improve tenure governance in fisheries (i.e. access rights to fishery resources and land ones for accessory activities).

1. Outputs 3.2

Considering the significance of the MAP instruments and tools, such as the Post-2020 SAP-BIO, the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean, the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP), and relevant SPA/BD Protocol Regional Action Plans in relation to the proposed project, as well as the prior efforts by the GFCM in assisting the MAP to monitor the good environmental status (GES) of Mediterranean ecosystems and biodiversity, Output 3.2, titled "Monitoring of good environmental status of Mediterranean ecosystems and biodiversity ensured, with established link to pollution impacts and sustainable use of marine ecosystem services," emphasizes the monitoring of this status. This includes enhancing national capacities to integrate commercial fisheries data, pollution impacts, and the sustainable use of marine ecosystem services into broader GES processes.

The Output is composed of set of activities as follows:

- **Activity 3.2.1** - Study to identify, under the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP), relations among the different indicators covering pollution and marine litter, biodiversity, non- indigenous species, coastal ecosystems and fisheries and define the contribution to the Good Environmental Status of Mediterranean marine waters and marine ecosystem by commercial fisheries.
- **Activity 3.2.2** - Compared analysis of the GFCM and the IMAP reporting frameworks to find out available data and required developments on the contribution to the Good Environmental Status of Mediterranean marine waters and marine ecosystem by data on commercial fisheries and incidentally caught vulnerable species according to the IMAP framework.
- **Activity 3.2.3** - GAP analysis study within the beneficiary countries on available capacities for integrating data on commercial fisheries and incidentally caught vulnerable species in the Good Environmental Status of marine waters and marine ecosystems, in line with IMAP requirements.
- **Activity 3.2.4** - Guidelines document for the integration in national monitoring plans of the contribution to the Good Environmental Status of Mediterranean marine waters and marine ecosystems by commercial fisheries data and their relations with biodiversity, pollution, and ecosystem services indicators.
- **Activity 3.2.5** - Technical assistance actions to interested Partner Countries to improve capacities for integrating data on the contribution by commercial fisheries and incidentally caught vulnerable species, and their relations with biodiversity, pollution and ecosystem services, in the Good Environmental Status of Mediterranean marine waters and marine ecosystem according to the national IMAP framework in line with Post 2020 SAPBIO Action 26.

1.2. Steps undertaken so far and to come

The output's related activities were launched in December 2024 with the recruitment of an IMAP expert in charge of the above-mentioned activities (3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3, and 3.2.4) as follows:

Task	Related activity	Implementation methodology	Deliverable	Expected deadline
Task 1- Conducting a study to identify relationships among different IMAP indicators	3.2.1	This task primarily involves analyzing the work completed so far to identify and understand the relationships among different IMAP indicators, including those on eutrophication (EO5), pollution (EO9), marine litter (EO10), biodiversity (EO1), non-indigenous species (EO2), coastal ecosystems (EO8), and fisheries (EO3). Cooperation with the GFCM Secretariat is essential for fisheries-related indicators. Additionally, although the indicators for EO11 (Energy, including underwater noise) have not yet been fully developed under IMAP, it is important to acknowledge the relevance of this issue, especially given the progress made on this topic under the EU MSFD.	Report on the identified relationships between different IMAP indicators	05 April 2025
Task 2- Conducting a comparative analysis of the GFCM and IMAP reporting frameworks regarding data availability for commercial	3.2.2	This analysis primarily focuses on various methodological aspects of data collection and availability within the GFCM reporting framework, as well as their linkage and relevance to the data collected and assessed through IMAP. For example, within the GFCM framework, data are collected on the status of commercial fish stocks, fishing efforts, and incidental catch (bycatch), including vulnerable species (with specific reference to the Data Collection Reference Framework – DCFR and the State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries reports – SoMFi). Under IMAP EO3, specific indicators measure GES related to fisheries, relying on data and information collected through the GFCM reporting system. However, fisheries-related data represent only one component of the broader GES	Report with the comparative analysis of the GFCM and IMAP reporting frameworks regarding the contribution of commercial fisheries and incidentally caught vulnerable species to GES	30 April 2025

fisheries and incidentally caught vulnerable species, and their contribution to GES		assessment of the marine environment, which also encompasses other factors (reference to Task 1). Moreover, the comparative analysis should identify gaps and needs, such as challenges related to data collection efforts, data coverage, availability, quality, validation, and processing. This will help determine the best approaches to harmonize both systems and ensure a comprehensive and accurate GES assessment under IMAP. The task requires close cooperation and support from the GFCM Secretariat.		
Task 3- Conducting a gap analysis within the 9 beneficiary countries on their capacities for integrating commercial fisheries and incidentally caught vulnerable species data into the GES, in line with IMAP requirements	3.2.3	This gap analysis will begin by reviewing existing commercial fisheries and incidental vulnerable species catch monitoring/data collection systems, including the legislative framework, national monitoring programs, responsible entities for data collection and processing, and their implementation (referred to as "systematic actions"). It will also assess efforts undertaken through individual projects and similar activities (referred to as "sporadic actions"). Furthermore, the analysis will evaluate GES assessment efforts based on available data, as well as transboundary cooperation. Ultimately, the document should identify strengths and weaknesses in existing capacities and processes and propose recommendations for improvement. To gather the necessary information, a review of relevant documents and literature—including national reports and specific GFCM documents—should be conducted. This task may also involve designing and distributing specific questionnaires to national focal points or other relevant country representatives.	Gap analysis study for Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey on available capacities for integrating relevant fisheries data into IMAP/GES. A potential milestone deliverable would be a questionnaire for national focal points or other relevant country representatives.	25 May 2025
Task 4 - Developing guidelines for	3.2.4	The guidelines will be developed primarily based on the results of the previous tasks. The guidelines should provide concrete recommendations on how to harmonize national monitoring programs with GES	Guidelines for integrating commercial fisheries and incidentally caught vulnerable species data into national	10 July 2025

integrating commercial fisheries and incidentally caught vulnerable species data into national monitoring programs, ensuring at least 70% coverage in GES assessments and linking them to biodiversity, pollution, ecosystem services, and IMAP indicators		assessment needs, how to link existing fisheries data to other relevant IMAP indicators, how to increase data coverage to achieve the 70% target, and how to build the necessary capacities to ensure that the system functions effectively in practice	monitoring programs, ensuring at least 70% coverage in GES assessments and linking them to other IMAP indicators	
--	--	---	--	--

Based on the results of Outcome 3.2, technical assistance will be provided to interested Partner Countries to enhance their capacities for integrating data on the contribution of commercial fisheries and incidentally caught vulnerable species into the Good Environmental Status assessment of Mediterranean marine waters and ecosystems. This integration will also consider their relationships with biodiversity, pollution, and ecosystem services, in accordance with the national IMAP framework and in line with Post-2020 SAPBIO Action 26.

The deliverables of Outcome 3.2 will be presented at the next CORMON meeting in 2026

2. Outputs 3.2

This output will focus on non-indigenous species and how they are reportedly impacting Mediterranean fisheries, biodiversity, human health, and ecosystem services, as well as linking to Output 1.3 to develop value chains for NIS targeted by commercial fisheries. Bearing in mind the environmental complexity of the Mediterranean Sea, this output would also provide an opportunity to address emerging potential stressors that are detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity and thus are hampering the productivity of fisheries and the efficacy of area-based management tools. This is the case, among others, of solid wastes including lost and abandoned fishing gear (with relevant linkages to Output 2.5). Measures will be identified and disseminated in cooperation with the GEF eligible Mediterranean countries to cope with the negative effects of those stressors.

The Output is composed of set of activities as follows:

- **Activity 3.3.1** - Support West and Central Mediterranean and Adriatic Partner Countries to conduct baseline studies and design monitoring and assessment programmes for data collection on NIS/IAS (national lists of alien species, their habitats, introduction pathways) and their impacts on biodiversity, human health, and ecosystem services including fisheries, within the framework of IMAP (Guidelines document, technical training of trainers (regional)) in line with Post 2020 SAPBIO Action 5 and 6 in coordination with the EcAp MED III project
- **Activity 3.3.2** - Technical support to Partner Countries to share data on NIS/IAS through the georeferenced online platform MAMIAS (manual, technical training (regional)) in line with Post 2020 SAPBIO Action 20
- **Activity 3.3.3** - Support to the identification and introduction of appropriate measures for the reduction of new introductions and for eradication/control of NIS in priority sites (regional workshop, guidelines document) in line with Post 2020 SAPBIO Action 5 and 6
- **Activity 3.3.4** - Support for reducing discharge of solid wastes from fishing boats (guidelines document) in line with Post 2020 SAPBIO Action 7

2.1. Steps undertaken so far and to come

The Activity 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 are for seen for the second semester of 2025. A workshop was organised on the 23 of January 2025, bringing together scientists, fishers, civil society organizations, national institutions, and entrepreneurs. Participants exchanged experiences and explored scalable solutions to tackle the NIS challenge in the Mediterranean. Discussions centred on prevention, eradication, and control strategies to safeguard biodiversity, ecosystems, and local livelihoods. Through expert insights, knowledge sharing, and collaborative dialogue, the workshop aimed to generate concrete recommendations and strategic actions for enhancing NIS management in the region. This initiative aligns with the Action Plan concerning Species Introductions and Invasive Species in the Mediterranean Sea under the Barcelona Convention, as well as the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO). It highlights the critical need for regional cooperation, early detection, and policy integration to effectively address this escalating threat. A guidelines document on the Identification and Introduction of Appropriate Measures for the Reduction of New Introductions and for Eradication/Control of Non-Indigenous Species (NIS) in Priority Sites in Line with Post 2020 SAPBIO with 9 measures for effective NIS management, including comprehensive biosecurity and early detection, standardized monitoring at sentinel sites, protecting ecosystems and native predators, and market valorisation of NIS products was presented and discussed. The document

is presented as information document (UNEP/MED WG.606/inf.5) to the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) Biodiversity and Fisheries

For the Activity 3.3.4, a consultant is hired to develop comprehensive guidelines aimed at reducing and managing solid waste discharge from fishing boats in the Mediterranean region. These guidelines should be aligned with the **Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean** and the Post-2020 SAPBIO Action 7 which focuses on preventing/removing marine litter and mitigating its impact on marine ecosystems. The guidelines should provide sustainable waste management practices and actionable strategies for fishing communities to minimize waste generation, contributing to the overall goal of reducing marine pollution. The final guidelines document will be ready by June 2025.