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Western Mediterranean fish stocks recovering under EU fisheries management plan

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

Report indicates Western Mediterranean fisheries management plan helped fish stocks recover, with 50 percent expected to reach sustainable levels by 2025

A new report from the European Commission reveals that fish stocks in the Western Mediterranean are recovering after five years of implementing the EU fisheries management plan, with 50 percent projected to reach sustainable levels by 2025.

The report examines the implementation of the Western Mediterranean multi-annual management plan for demersal fish stocks and its fisheries. It concludes that numerous fish stocks have started to recover since 2019. According to scientific projections, 50 percent of the stocks could reach sustainable fishing levels by 2025 – a turning point on the road to the full recovery.

The latest data from the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) shows that 20 percent of the stocks are being harvested sustainably – at maximum sustainable yield (MSY) – and that 15 percent are close. The fisheries management plan has enabled stocks, such as red mullet in



A new European Commission report indicates that the implementation of a Western Mediterranean fisheries management plan has helped fish stocks recover. Photo by [Isaac Mijangos](https://www.pexels.com/photo/underwater-photography-of-a-swimming-bluefin-12829694/) (<https://www.pexels.com/photo/underwater-photography-of-a-swimming-bluefin-12829694/>).

the Gulf of Lion to fully recover, while ensuring long-term social and economic viability for fishers operating in the region.

Since 2019, the fisheries management plan has aimed to reach sustainable fishing levels for 20 stocks by January 2025 and reduce the overcapacity of the Mediterranean fleet. It included a five-year transition for the fleet to adapt and minimize impacts on fishers, while also improving transparency in managing fisheries.

An advertisement banner for Best Seafood Practices. On the left, there are two small images: a person in a yellow protective suit and mask handling fish, and a fishing boat on the ocean. The main text reads: "A comprehensive solution for the wild seafood supply chain." To the right, there are three checkmarks with the following text: "Crew rights", "Food safety", and "Environmental responsibility". On the far right, there is the Best Seafood Practices logo, which consists of a stylized fish icon and the text "Best Seafood Practices". Below the logo is a button that says "LEARN MORE" with a right-pointing arrow.

(<https://bspcertification.org/>).

The Western Mediterranean fleet showed high profitability in 2023, according to recent economic data. The fleet's positive economic performance was mainly due to high first-sale prices and contained fuel costs.



Defining and monitoring destructive fishing represents a new era in fisheries policy

Thanks to a new multistakeholder framework, researchers are a step closer to better understanding destructive fishing and addressing its impacts.



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The report highlights how the multi-annual management plan enabled Spain, France and Italy to transition from “a traditional and limited effort management at a national level to a more efficient EU fisheries management system.” Adopted in 2019, it's the first EU plan in the Mediterranean Sea involving shared management with non-EU countries. The plan covers fisheries in Spanish, French and Italian waters, affecting over 4,300 fishers and 1,200 trawlers.

During the plan's transition period, a fishing effort regime for trawlers was introduced to cut 40 percent of fishing effort within five years. By January 2025, all provisions of the plan will be fully implemented to ensure sustainable fishing levels.

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