Sustainable fisheries roots in the Mediterranean

Ecosafimed project between Tunisia, Italy and Spain achieved between promoting responsible and sustainable fishing sector for the conservation of marine ecosystems practices. After two years of scientific studies in close collaboration with fishermen, the main result of this program is the development of guidelines for the artisanal fleet in order to improve conservation of benthic communities in the Mediterranean.

The studies developed under the project have also identified areas of high ecological value in the future may be subject to specific management to promote their special protection. The project "Conservation of ecosystems and sustainable artisanal fisheries in the Mediterranean basin (Ecosafimed)" held in Spain, Italy and Tunisia has been aimed at the conservation of marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean basin and the promotion of artisanal fishing practices that reconcile the protection of marine fauna.

To this aim, it has made an assessment of the state of benthic communities in different parts of the Mediterranean, while it has studied the impact of some métiers fishing on benthic fauna, all in collaboration with fishermen, as well as various national and international organizations. The

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment, through the Biodiversity Foundation, has been the coordinator of this initiative, which has had other partners such as the National Research Council-Institute of the Sea (Spain) Science University Genoa (Italy) and the National Institute of Marine Science and Technology - INSTM (Tunisia).

Collaboration between all these agencies has been fundamental for the exchange of knowledge in marine research, both methodologies and the use of innovative technologies, one of the most significant results of the project. Ecosafimed The project has developed a proposal of good practices for the artisanal fleet in order to improve conservation of benthic communities in the Mediterranean. The partners have agreed a series of recommendations for the entire basin, based on the results obtained in different areas of study: Cap de Creus, Canal de Menorca (Spain), Galite archipelago, bank Esquerquis (Tunisia), the Gulf of Patti Archipelago and Ponza (Italy).
These proposals have been agreed with the artisanal fishermen who participated in the project with the intention to sign voluntary agreements that commit to adopt these best practices on a voluntary basis and long term.

Valuable ecosystems

Return water discards of benthic invertebrates and habitat-forming species in less than 30 minutes and in the same place where he has made the capture, and avoid damage to the extent possible, it has been one of the resulting recommendations of the project. Scientific studies have shown that the survival of bycatch of benthic species increases if they are returned to the sea as soon as possible, thereby reducing exposure to air and temperature changes. Good practices are also recommended to avoid fishing in areas where there had been fragile communities, promote areas of fisheries restricted where found valuable and sensitive ecosystems, or the use of more selective gear and materials more efficient networks, as there Experiments show that the type of gear used plays an important role in the magnitude of the impact it causes on the seabed.

Promote the periodic maintenance of fishing nets, to reduce the impact by reducing the number of fishing operations in the same location during the same season, or decrease the length of the fishing gear they are also measures to reduce the impact of fishing craft on benthic communities. Finally, promoting the integration of acquired by fishermen in scientific studies and monitoring activities knowledge, it is another recommendation that has led to this initiative. The long experience acquired by fishermen for years of work has to be considered a fundamental source of information.

Data on outstanding catches, the appearance of rare species or location of large populations of species or unusual structural details can be of great help to improve the knowledge we have of the seabed by the scientific community, allowing the identification of places with a high ecological value that can be considered as areas of special protection. Finally, one of the recommendations from the project has been the development of videos that allow a simple and direct way, awareness on the promotion of good fishing practices.

Throughout this project is confirmed to display videos clearly setting out the scientific basis of certain statements, such as the existence of lost fishing gear, the survival of discarded species or state agencies once returned to the sea , achieve greater public attention and more positive than any technical or graphical report reception. The videos should be viewed as a priority communication tool and as a key element in proposing recommendations to fishermen.

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Ecosafimed project & ENPI CBC MED program

With a budget of 1.9 million euros, the Ecosafimed project promotes responsible fishing practices and communication between research and the artisanal fisheries sector in order to contribute to the conservation of marine ecosystems. Ecosafimed is one of 39 projects that were beneficiaries of the 1,095 submitted to the second call of the ENPI CBC MED Programme 2007-2013. The Mediterranean Basin ENPI program is a European cross-border cooperation as part of the instrument of the European Neighbourhood Policy and Partnership (IEPV-ENPI). The program aims to promote cooperation between the 3 regions of the two shores of the Mediterranean to meet the common challenges and enhancing its endogenous potential.

A total of 14 countries are beneficiaries of the program, representing 76 territories and nearly 110 million inhabitants: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Palestinian Authority, Portugal, Spain, Syria and Tunisia . The program has a budget of 200 million from the Instrument for the European Neighbourhood and Partnership and the contribution for each project amounts to a maximum of 90% of the total cost. Funded projects cover various topics related to the promotion of socio-economic and territorial development, by supporting innovation and research; sustainable development and energy efficiency throughout the Mediterranean basin; improving the conditions and modalities of movement of persons, goods and capital and the promotion of dialogue between cultures and governance.

Ecosafimed project information and ENPI CBC MED Programme is available on the website of ENPI CBC MED and the Office of Development and EuropeAid Cooperation. This publication has been produced with the financial support of the European Union under the ENPI CBC Mediterranean Basin Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the Biodiversity Foundation and can not be considered under any circumstances reflect the position of the European Union or of the management structures of the program.

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