



Commentary: The Saga of the Management of Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea: History, Flaws, Difficulties, and Successes toward the Application of the Common Fisheries Policy in the Mediterranean

Hendrik Dörner* and John Casey

European Commission, Joint Research Centre (JRC), Ispra, Italy

Keywords: CFP, STECF, Mediterranean Sea, fisheries management, scientific advice

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:

Lyne Morissette,
M – Expertise Marine, Canada

Reviewed by:

Angel Pérez-Ruzafa,
University of Murcia, Spain
Manel Antelo,
University of Santiago de Compostela,
Spain

Marcus Geoffrey Haward,
University of Tasmania, Australia

*Correspondence:

Hendrik Dörner
hendrik.doerner@ec.europa.eu

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Marine Affairs and Policy,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Marine Science

Received: 19 March 2018

Accepted: 23 November 2018

Published: 19 December 2018

Citation:

Dörner H and Casey J (2018)
Commentary: The Saga of the
Management of Fisheries in the
Adriatic Sea: History, Flaws,
Difficulties, and Successes toward the
Application of the Common Fisheries
Policy in the Mediterranean.
Front. Mar. Sci. 5:468.
doi: 10.3389/fmars.2018.00468

A Commentary on

The Saga of the Management of Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea: History, Flaws, Difficulties, and Successes toward the Application of the Common Fisheries Policy in the Mediterranean
by Carpi, P., Scarcella, G., and Cardinale, M. (2017). *Front. Mar. Sci.* 4:423.
doi: 10.3389/fmars.2017.00423

The article presents an overview of the history, processes and key players involved in fisheries management in the Adriatic Sea using two case studies; the fishery for sardine (*Sardina pilchardus* L.) and anchovy (*Engraulis encrasicolus* L.) and the fishery for *Nephrops norvegicus* L. (Carpi et al., 2017). Based on their overview, the authors argue *inter alia*, that to align Mediterranean management with the EU CFP and achieve MSY targets, the lack of coordination and definition of roles between key players need to be resolved. In this regard, we note several factual errors and inaccuracies.

The article states that the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) is defined as “... an EC body that is meant to be the EC scientific forum” and that the STECF’s role in the regional context (in this case, the Mediterranean region) is not clearly defined. Such statements are misleading. The STECF is a formal European Commission expert group established by Commission Decision (European Commission, 2005, 2016a) and which comprises public and/or private sector members, to provide the Commission with independent advice (European Commission, 2016b). The Commission Decision on STECF also clearly sets out the conditions for the involvement of STECF members in both a regional and international context.

The technical discussion relating to the assessment of *N. norvegicus* in the Adriatic Sea commencing on page 6, makes reference to a particular stock assessment model being imposed by the “EC Joint Research Centre (JRC)—EC Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF).” There is no question of a particular model being imposed by the JRC or the STECF as the decision on the most appropriate assessment model represents the considered opinion of the Expert Working Group. If an individual (or individuals) disagrees with the decision of the Expert Working Group, the STECF rules of procedure allow a minority statement to be incorporated in the report of the Expert Working Group, and attributed to the individual expert or experts. We are unaware of any such minority statement.

The discussion introduced in paragraph 3 on page 10, is largely speculative opinion. The authors criticize the STECF “for its reluctance in involving non-EU scientists in the scientific discussion in the Mediterranean context” and “for a recent tendency of imposing its view and modus operandi in scientific for a,” but no arguments to support such opinions are presented. Furthermore, participants in STECF Expert Working Groups are invited by the European Commission according to their professional expertise, not on national affiliation and are selected from the list of experts that have registered their interest to participate in such groups. The article goes on to express that the STECF, supported by the JRC, appears to be transitioning toward becoming a decisional organ and attributes this to both a historical weakness of the GFCM-SAC and its relationship with DG MARE and the STECF (our interpretation of “its scientific advisory bodies”). Again, no arguments to support such opinions are presented.

The article alleges that stock assessments undertaken by STECF Expert Working groups are scrutinized in plenum by members of the STECF, which are very often the same experts who carried out the assessments. It is likely that some of the members of the STECF will have participated in the Expert Working Group that carried out the assessments, because, in accordance with the STECF Rules of Procedure (STECF, 2016a),

at least two STECF members are expected to participate in each Expert Working Group. Nevertheless, the STECF reviews of Expert Working Group reports represent the consensus view of the entire committee and every member has the opportunity to contribute to the decision whether an assessment is accepted.

On a procedural note, the authors fail to mention that over the period described in the article they have all participated in the STECF Expert Working Group on Mediterranean stock assessments either as an invited expert, STECF members or Expert Working Group chair (e.g., STECF, 2016b). Surely it would have been appropriate for them to declare their involvement and role in the scientific advisory process that they criticize.

Finally, while the article contains a lot of useful factual information, it also presents a substantial amount of unsubstantiated opinion thereby reducing its credibility as an objective review. As such, we believe it would have been appropriate for it to have been published as an opinion paper, as opposed to a review article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Both authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

REFERENCES

- Carpi, P, Scarcella, G., and Cardinale, M., (2017). The saga of the management of fisheries in the Adriatic Sea: history, flaws, difficulties, and successes toward the application of the common fisheries policy in the Mediterranean. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 4:423. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2017.00423
- European Commission (2005). *Commission Decision of 26 August 2005 Establishing a Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (2005/629/EC)*. OJ L 225, 18–22.
- European Commission (2016a). *Commission Decision of 25 February 2016 Setting up a Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (2016/C 74/05)*. OJ C 74, 4–10.
- European Commission (2016b). *Commission Decision of 30.5.2016 Establishing Horizontal Rules on the cReation and Operation of Commission Expert Groups C(2016) 3301 Final*.
- Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) (2016a). *Rules of Procedure*. Available online at: <https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/about-stecf>
- Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) (2016b). *Mediterranean Assessments Part 2 (STECF-16-08)*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, EUR 27758 EN, JRC 101548, 483.

Conflict of Interest Statement: Both authors have been intimately involved in providing scientific advice to the European Commission for over a decade; JC as a member and former Chair of the STECF; and HD as an employee of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre and representative of the STECF Secretariat. JC was employed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre from June 2014 to July 2018.

Copyright © European Union. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.