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IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISATION OF THE SMALL-SCALE DRIFTNET FISHERIES IN THE ITALIAN SEAS

IDENTIFICAZIONE E DESCRIZIONE DELLA PESCA CON PICCOLE RETI DERIVANTI NEI MARI ITALIANI

Abstract - *This note is aimed to identify and characterize the small-scale driftnet fisheries in Italy. During the investigations, performed in March-October 2013, 99 vessels belonging to eight fisheries were identified. The fisheries are very specialised: by-catch is often negligible, as well as the overall impact on the environment. The nets used were size selective on the target species, only specimens above MLS were caught.*

Key-words: *driftnets, fishery management, small-scale fisheries, Mediterranean Sea.*

Introduction - Small-Scale Driftnets (SSD hereinafter) of limited length (<2 km) and mesh size (<100 mm) have been historically used in Mediterranean without major environmental concerns. Problems started in the 70s-80s: the introduction of driftnets with larger meshes and much greater length, targeting swordfish and tuna, created environmental concern, due to the incidence of unwanted catches. The current regulation prohibits driftnets longer than 2.5 km and used to catch large pelagics and sharks (EC, 1992, 2007). In May 2014 the EC announced the intention of a moratorium on driftnets fishing. In this context, a specific study was realised to characterize the SSD in Mediterranean (Sartor, 2014). This note reports the first results for Italy.

Materials and methods - From March to October 2013 in 23 harbours, information on fishing capacity and activity, gear characteristics, catch composition was collected by means of 96 interviews, 254 logbooks and 55 embarks on professional vessels.

Results - According to the EU Fleet Register, in 2013 a total of 467 vessels could potentially use SSD in Italy, but only 99 effectively used these gears in the period investigated; they were distributed in eight fisheries, especially in southern Italy (Tab. 1). These fisheries are strictly seasonal, except the "menaide" of eastern Sicily, active all year round. The majority of the vessels were <12 m length and operate close to the coast. The target species dominated the caught biomass (from 70 to 100%); the by catch was relevant only for the "sgomberara" and mostly constituted by bullet tuna. Discard was always scarce, the not authorised species were rare and the protected ones were not observed. The catch of target species was composed entirely by specimens greater than the size at first sexual maturity and larger than the Minimum Landing Size (MLS). The average length of the "menaide" nets was always <500 m, the maximum length was observed for the "ferrettara" in GSA 10 (2400 m). The mesh size of the "menaide" ranged from 20 to 30 mm, for the other nets from 70 to 90 mm.

Tab. 1 - Summary of the characteristics of the SSD fisheries in Italy.

Sintesi delle caratteristiche della pesca con piccole reti derivanti in Italia.

Fishery	1	2	3	4
Area	GSA 19 E Sicily Catania area	GSA 10 Campania Cilento area	GSA 9 Liguria	GSA 10 N Sicily
Local name	"menaide"	"menaide"	"occhiatara"	"sgomberara"
Target species	<i>E. encrasicolus</i>	<i>E. encrasicolus</i>	<i>O. melanura</i>	<i>Scomber</i> spp. <i>Trachurus</i> spp.
Fishing period	All year	April-June	May-June	All year
No. of vessels	28	19	5	30
No. fishermen	115	57	10	90
Annual fishing days (avg by boat)	145	20	14.5	60
Avg mesh size	20.5 mm	27 mm	79.4 mm	80.2 mm
Avg net length	280 m	425 m	413 m	921 m
Total catches	48.0 kg/day	37.0 kg/day	88.3 kg/day	142.0 kg/day
Composition of the catch (% in weight)	Target 91.5 % By catch 8.1 % Discard 0.4 %	Target 76.3 % By catch 23.7 % Discard 0.0 %	Target 69.5 % By catch 29.8 % Discard 0.7 %	Target 1.6 % By catch 98.4 % Discard 0.0 %
Main by catch species	<i>S. pilchardus</i>	<i>S. pilchardus</i>	<i>S. colias</i> <i>T. mediterraneus</i>	<i>A. rochei</i>
Fishery	5	6	7	8
Area	GSA 10 N Sicily S. Agata Militello	GSA 10 N Sicily S. Agata Militello	GSA 10 Campania Gulf of Naples	GSA 16 W Sicily Selinunte area
Local name	"menaide"	"ricciolara"	"ferrettara"	"menaide"
Target species	<i>E. encrasicolus</i>	<i>S. dumerili</i>	<i>P. saltatrix</i>	<i>E. encrasicolus</i>
Fishing period	June-August	August-October	June-October	May-September
No. of vessels	7	3	2	5
No. fishermen	15	6	4	20
Annual fishing days (avg by boat)	20	40	70	33
Avg mesh size	20 mm	70 mm	88 mm	20 mm
Avg net length	500 m	900 m	2400 m	202 m
Total catches	88.0 kg/day	16.0 kg/day	48.0 kg/day	n.a.
Composition of the catch (% in weight)	Target 93.7 % By catch 0.0 % Discard 0.7 %	Target 58.4 % By catch 41.6 % Discard 0.0 %	Target 89.0 % By catch 11.0 % Discard 0.0 %	n.a.
Main by catch species	Not present	<i>P. erythrinus</i> <i>T. mediterraneus</i>	<i>T. ovatus</i> <i>L. amia</i>	n.a.

Conclusions - This study shows that SSD currently used in Italy are species-specific gears with an overall low impact on the environment. The nets also resulted highly size selective on the target species, since only specimens above MLS were caught. These aspects, together with the economic importance at local scale, can provide robust evidences to implement specifically oriented management measures, which could ensure the regulated activity of these fisheries.

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The study was supported by the EU Contract Identification and characterisation of the small scale fisheries in Mediterranean ("DRIFTMED"), EU MAREA Framework (MARE/2009/05-Lot 1).