



**BLACK SEA ADVISORY COUNCIL /BISAC/
CONSILIUL CONSULTATIV PENTRU MAREA
NEAGRA**

Association registered in The Register of
Non-Profit Legal Entities (RNPLE)
of R.Bulgaria UIC 176964109
Headquarters and address of management:
Varna, 24-26 Ohrid Str., fl.1
office@blsaceu.eu

Asociatie, inregistrata in Registrul
persoanelor juridice fara scop patrimonial
al R Bulgaria, CUI 176964109
Sediu si adresa de conducere:
Mun. Varna, str. "Ohrid" N 24-26, etaj 1
office@blsaceu.eu

MINUTES

From the meeting of Focus Group 3 of BISAC - May 10, 2022.

Topic: "Rapana fishing"

On May 10, 2022 in the hotel Continental Forum, Constanta and via video link in ZOOM was held a meeting of Focus Group 3 of BISAC on the topic: "Rapana fishing".

The meeting was attended: r Mr. Hussein Özdemir Coordinator in the Technical Unit of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) in Bulgaria, Ms. Yana Velina from the Ministry of Environment and Water, Mr. Konstantin Petrov Representative of the GFCM for Bulgaria, Mr. Kolyo Zhelev - Executive Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture /EAFA/ Statistics Directorate, Mrs. Dimitrina Chakarova - EAFA, Mr. Victor Nita - Grigore Antipa Institute, Mr. Alexandru Simeonov - National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture /NAFA/, Constanta.

The meeting was opened by the Secretary General of BISAC Mr. Yordan Gospodinov.

The following is a presentation by Mr. Hussein Özdemir, Coordinator of the Blacksea4fish project, on the topic: "Studies with a trawl of the rapana in the Black Sea".

General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) establishes a regional research program for the sustainable exploitation of *Rapana venosa* in the Black Sea - geographical sub-area 29. On the project BlackSea4Fish a coordination meeting is organized for its implementation, harmonization of data collection and planning of research at sea. A common protocol for the study of rapana has been adopted for the Black Sea and an experimental study with a trawl has been carried out. The studies were conducted in the fall of 2020 and 2021, and in the spring of 2021. The aim is to conduct the first standardized scientific study of rapana in the Black Sea in order to obtain information on the abundance, length and age composition of this species. The studies were carried out on merchant or research ships equipped with an engine of at least 186 kW (250 hp). The trawling speed is from 1.5 to 2.0 knots and the duration is 30 minutes. The mesh size of the trawl net is 72 mm and the size of the beam trawl is 3 m. The samples were made at a depth of 5-15 m; 15-

25 m and 25-35 m. The presentation clearly shows the places with the largest accumulation of rapana, as well as detailed characteristics of the dimensions.

The conclusions drawn from this study are as follows:

- This is the first cooperative standardized scientific study of rapana in the Black Sea, conducted according to the same protocol;
- This initiative will continue in the coming years;
- The results are preliminary, as this is the first stage of the study (the results of the 2nd and 3rd studies are still being processed):
- Rapana is agglomerated to a depth of 20 m;
- The average length of the rapana is 60 mm;
- The highest abundance and biomass are registered in the northwestern part of the Black Sea;
- The largest specimens are registered in the deepest waters.

Discussions follow:

Ms. Yana Velina asked Mr. Hussein Özdemir whether the maximum allowable catch for rapana would be introduced.

Mr. Hussein Özdemir: Discussions on the topic in the GFCM are still ongoing - whether the species should be eradicated or, after it had change the ecosystem, the species to be exploited in a sustainable way. Rapana's research needs to continue and more data needs to be gathered.

Danko Penev from the RO-Pescador Association asks Mr. Hussein Özdemir: why a trawling speed of 1.5 - 2 knots was chosen, because fishermen usually fish with 3.2 -3.6 knots, and the trawling time is at least 1 hour, so a larger area is covered. Also in these 30 minutes of trawling do they include the time for raising and lowering the trawl?

Mr. Hussein Özdemir: The research protocols for the Blacksea4fish project were made by all partners from the Black Sea countries, including six research institutes, which determined the parameters of the study. The aim is not to catch more, as is the case with fishing, but to carry out research using the same methodology everywhere. The speed was set at 1.5 - 2 knots, because this is an efficient speed using a beam trawl with a fishing vessel with 250 hp. and a fixed time of 30 min is set.

Mr. Marian Payu: Mare Nostrum NGO: The presentation mentions that there are some species detained during the study as accidental by-catches, what are they? The other issue is related to the conclusions and recommendations made by the GFCM to the fisheries sector and to environmental organizations..

Mr. Hussein Özdemir: the device used is not representative to say what is the by-catch from trawling. The trawl is only 2 m and there is no type of fish that can be caught with this device, it only concerns the rapana. Regarding the second question, a scientific program is recommended - to study everything about this species - distribution, size, age, mortality, environmental aspects, etc., with the aim of sustainability of rapana fishing.

Following is a presentation by Mr. Victor Nice from the Institute for Marine Research and Development in Constanta "Grigore Antipa", on the topic "Expedition to study the rapana venus with a beam trawl off the Romanian coast".

Rapana is an invasive species for the Black Sea and was first reported off the coast of Romania in 1963. In recent years, the species has become an object of industrial exploitation, and in the beginning the rapana was fished only with the help of divers, and subsequently with beam trawl, which was authorized in Romania in 2013. The stock values in tonnes for rapana in the Romanian Black Sea sector are as follows:

- 2016 – 14 000 tons;
- 2017 – 17 500 tons;
- 2018 – 17 500 tons;
- 2019 – 15 000 tons;
- 2020 – 15 000 tons;
- 2021 – 8 007 tons.

The methodology of the research conducted by the Institute is in accordance with the protocol provided by GKRSM on the Blacksea4Fish project, standardized in the demonstration expedition organized in Trabzon. A Turkish trawl was used, towed by the research ship "Steaua de Mare 1" with an engine power of 570 hp, connected to the winch with a cable of 12 mm. The trawling speed is set to 2 knots.

The conclusions of the expedition are the following:

1. The total weight of the catch is 400 kg in the autumn of 2021;
2. The total number of specimens taken is 10,050 measured individuals;
3. The composition by age classes - from 3 to 12 years;
4. The highest values of abundance and biomass of rapana are in autumn;
5. The total values of rapana biomass for 2021 are estimated at 8 007 tons, which shows a declining trend in the available stock in the study area.

Following is a presentation by Mr. Yordan Gospodinov on "Catching and processing of fish, mussels and rapana along the Bulgarian coast".

The catches of rapana in Bulgaria in recent years are as follows:

- 2018 – 3 515.4 tons,
- 2019 – 4 222.1 tons,
- 2020 – 2 745.6 tons.
- 2021 – 2 166.4 tons.

The number of rapana vessels is as follows:

- 2018 - 189 ships;
- 2019 - 208 ships;
- 2020 - 180 ships.

The socio-economic interest in the catch of rapana is shown as the value of the catches sold from the first sale of rapana (using the average price at the first sale for the respective year) which by year is:

- 2018 - BGN 3 972 402;
- 2019 - BGN 3 842 111;
- 2020 - BGN 2 031 744.

The number of jobs occupied in rapana fishing in 2019 was 139 paid employees and 171 unpaid employees. The processing is carried out in six companies that operate year-round and two seasonally. In the active season, up to 1 200 workers work in the processing.

The conclusion of the presentation is that the future plan for the management of rapana must take into account the high regional employment. Barriers and restrictions should not be placed to restrict the development of this area of the yield and production of high value-added foods. The species is an extremely export-oriented and sought-after product.

Discussions follow:

Mr. Daniel Buhai: from the presentations made as a conclusion it can be said that rapana fishing is the only means of controlling the species, as said by Mr. Hussein Özdemir, and Mr. Victor Nice mentioned in his presentation that the aim is to catch rapana become an environmental tool. It is hoped that the GFCM will develop recommendations in favor of the economic and environmental approach taken together, so that the people engaged in catching and processing rapana do not lose their jobs.

Mr. Hussein Özdemir: This year's rapana consultations began on March 29, 2022 in Trapzon, Turkey, followed by a meeting in Constanta, Romania on April 19 and in Bulgaria on April 28. A regional online meeting was held on May 9, 2022 with about 100 participants. The results of the consultations are yet to be evaluated and the best measures for rapana management in the region will be discussed. "The workshop for DMR forum" and the research program are examples of regional co-operation and how the countries are joining forces with the help of the GFCM and the EU so that Rapana can be effectively managed in the Black Sea. Partners in the Blacksea4fish project are the Bulgarian Institute of Fisheries Resources, the National Environment Agency of Georgia, the Romanian National Institute for Marine Research and Development Grigore Antipa, the Turkish Central Institute for Fisheries Research (SUMAE), the Istanbul University Faculty of Fisheries, a Ukrainian team of experts.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: The topic of catching rapana will continue to be relevant for debate. The share of employees in its catching and processing is large. Rules and restrictions must be in line with science and business.

Mr. Hussein Özdemir: the socio-economic aspect is very important for all activities. In the second part of 2022, the Blacksea4fish project aims to conduct a socio-economic study in relation to rapana fishing and hopes that next 2023 there will be some results. Another important thing that was found in this project is that the regulations and legislation in Bulgaria and Romania on rapana are not harmonized - for example, there is no minimum for unloading and mesh size of the net. Of course, more information is needed on this species so that adequate measures can be taken.

Mr. Danko Penev: For Romania there is a limit for the mesh of the net when catching rapana and it is 5 cm.

Next: closing the meeting.

The minutes was prepared by Mrs. Elena Peneva

Chairman of BISAC – Mr. Daniel Buhai