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Interview with Federcoopesca

Interview with Nino Accetta, chairman of Federcoopesca Sicily (Italy)

The main point of reference for Sicilian co-operatives in the fishing and aquaculture sector is Federcoopesca, the Federation of Fishing Cooperatives. This group consists of 84 co-operatives (with a total of 1328 members) involved in production, research, processing and marketing.

Federcoopesca makes decisions on actions to be taken in the sector, and defines and creates approaches and programmes to be developed for its members, helping them technically and economically with continual updates on technical, regulatory, economic and market conditions.

Federcoopesca also plays a fully active part in the agreement approved by the Sicily Region which, by establishing and strengthening assistance from regional fishery centres, is developing critical assistance measures in keeping with EU guidelines.



Mr. Nino Accetta during the launch seminar in Patti, July 2014.

Mr Accetta, how did you learn about the ECOSAFIMED project?

We became involved through the National Research Council (CNR) of Messina in Sicily, a scientific institute that we have collaborated with for a long time.

What impact do you feel that a project like ENPI CBCMED ECOSAFIMED has, both locally in the Gulf of Patti and on a wider Mediterranean scale?

Increasing our knowledge of the biocoenoses living on the seabed helps in developing more accurate actions to lessen the impact that artisanal fishing can have on the marine ecosystem, both locally and on a wider scale.

How important is the artisanal fishing fleet in Patti, and what kind of collaboration is there between your municipality, the research bodies and the fishing community?

About 50% of the fishing fleet in Patti is artisanal. There is a strong relationship between the fishermen and the research groups, and one example is the Local Management Plan (PdGL), which targets how to manage measures that particularly affect fishing procedures used in the various métiers operating in the Gulf. The scientific teams helping to support this plan are the *Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research* (ISPRA), the *Institute for Coastal Marine Environment of the National Research Council* (IAMC-CNR) and the *Institute for Economic Research in Fishery and Aquaculture* (IREPA).

What impact do you think that the guidelines identified by the scientists in collaboration with the fishermen will have on the conservation of marine ecosystems and artisanal fishing?

Everybody will have to take full responsibility for the common interest of preserving the marine ecosystem and its resources.

What conservation measures are already in place in Patti?

The measures developed within the Local Management Plan (PdGL) include the voluntarily reduction of trawling and long-line fishing effort; collective measures to enhance the quality and safety of fishing products; taking part in courses to improve professional skills (safety at sea, product quality); limitations on the length of fishing gears; banning trawling nets on phanerogam banks; and other critical areas of particular interest, such as the nurseries already listed in the Plan.

How do you think artisanal fishing can help in marine ecosystem conservation?

With good fishing practices based on more selective gears.

In your opinion, what are the advantages and problems linked to identifying protected areas?

One advantage could be increasing the available fishing resource by observing rules limiting fishing gears but which are also aimed at encouraging a more responsible use.

ECOSAFIMED study area: Pontine Islands, Italy

Selecting the study areas

The Pontine Islands are one of the study areas selected by the ECOSAFIMED project.

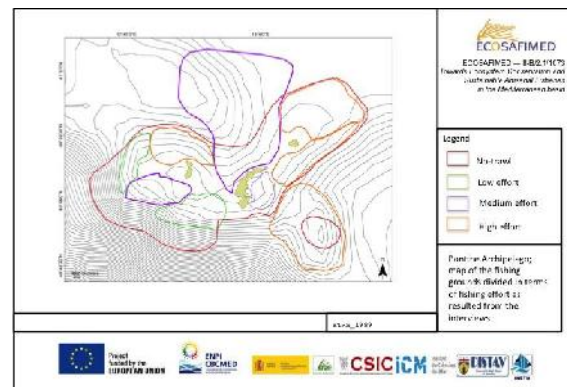
This archipelago, which is also known as the Pontine Islands, is off the western coast of Italy, around 40 nautical miles from the Gulf of Gaeta coastline, in the Tyrrhenian Sea. It consists of six islands divided into two groups around 22 miles apart: the islands of Ponza, Palmarola, Zannone and Gave to the north east, and Ventotene and Santo Stefano to the south west. Also, around six miles to the south west of Ponza there is a solitary rocky outcrop known as the Scoglio della Botte.



Ponza Island

These islands date from the Early Pleistocene era as a result of dispersion forces in a northwest and southeast direction under the oceanic plate in the Tyrrhenian area, a feature leading to the volcanic nature of the islands, typified by severe gradients and sharp relief. The resultant roughness of the continental platform allows for trawl fishing in the coastal area of Ponza, Zannone and Palmarola.

In collaboration with the fishermen who work around these islands, eight artisanal fishing areas were identified, two with a high fishing effort, three medium and two low.

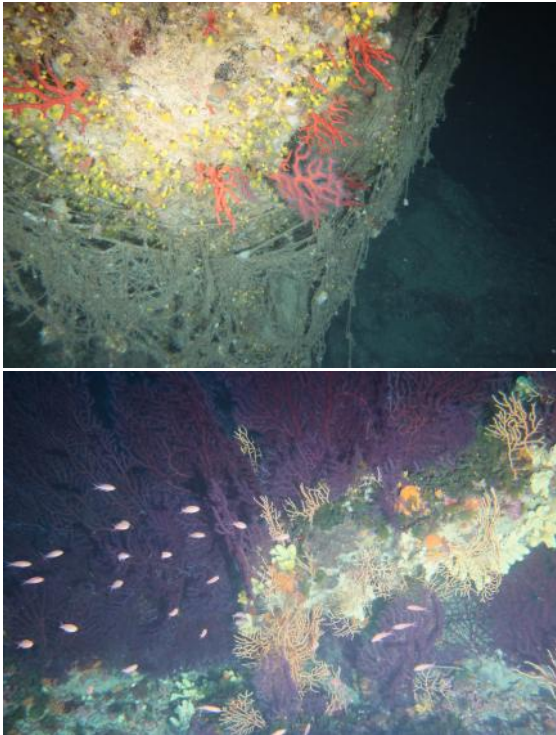


Artisanal fishing in the Pontine Islands.

Ecosystems

In terms of the ecosystems found in the archipelago, only the islands of Ventotene and Santo Stefano are under a regime of protection. ECOSAFIMED studies carried out using underwater cameras installed on a remotely operated vehicle have shown that throughout the archipelago (in particular in the area of Ponza,

Palmarola and Zannone) there is a predominance of detritic, rocky and maerl habitats, as well as large meadows of *Posidonia oceanica*, black coral forests, sea fans, anthozoa (including *Arachnanthus oligopodus*), hydrozoa and sponges, among other species. The seabed is therefore of high ecological value.



Images obtained from underwater cameras in areas with and without an impact in Italy.

Fishing activity

Most port activity is found on Ponza Island. The main port is on the south east of the island, specifically at Molo Musco, which is surrounded by a natural reef. At this port, artisanal fishing boats coexist with a complex maritime traffic of recreational boats, such as ferries, charter boats and tourist boats that carry tourists to beaches that cannot be reached by land, mainly in the summer months.

Ponza has a fishing fleet of 36 boats: two trawlers, which operate from late spring to summer, fishing for red prawns only (*Aristeomorpha foliacea* and *Aristeus antennatus*), two boats operating with seine nets to catch anchovies (*Engraulis encrasicolus*), 20 artisanal boats (length <12 m) that use various methods depending on the target species each season, and 12 multi-use boats (length > 12 m) that work with fixed

nets, mainly in summer to catch swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*). In the central part of the island there is another small port called Le Fornia, where boats are almost entirely recreational, with almost no fishing at all.



Main port on Ponza Island, Molo Musco

In the Pontine Islands, therefore, artisanal fishing features heavily, and in the spring/summer months there is a predominance of mesh nets and longline seabed fishing (*Merluccius*, *Lepidopus caudatus*, *Mullus surmuletus*, *Spicara smaris*), followed by seine fishing (*Engraulis encrasicolus*) and gill nets (*Sepia officinalis*, *Scorpaena sp*, *Palinurus elephas*).



Artisanal fishing with gill nets

ECOSAFIMED events

Meetings with fishermen

During November and December various meetings will be held with fishermen who have been involved in the project, to inform them of the scientific conclusions obtained and to seek their co-operation in adopting better fishing practices. Meetings will be held in Tunisia, Italy and Spain.



More information

Website

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The 2007-2013 ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme is a multilateral Cross-Border Cooperation initiative funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The Programme objective is to promote the sustainable and harmonious cooperation process at the Mediterranean Basin level by dealing with the common challenges and enhancing its endogenous potential. It finances cooperation projects as a contribution to the economic, social, environmental and cultural development of the Mediterranean region. The following 14 countries participate in the Programme: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Palestine, Portugal, Spain, Syria (participation currently suspended), and Tunisia. The Joint Managing Authority (JMA) is the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (Italy). Official Programme languages are Arabic, English and French. (www.enpicbmed.eu).

The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its border.

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