

## Interviews with Tunisian associates

Interviewing project associates and key targets group is a unique way to help capture the impact of the project from a different perspective, especially the more qualitative aspects of the work that cannot be measured in numbers. It also gives the interviewer and the public a better understanding of the stakeholders' point of view, and improves future co-operation. Several associates of the ECOSAFIMED project who are collaborating to preserve the ecosystem and sustain artisanal fisheries were interviewed in Tunisia, Spain and Italy. This newsletter is dedicated to interviews conducted on the southern shore of the Mediterranean basin: Tunisia. Most of these interviews were carried out during special project events, such as Steering Committee meetings and informative days.

As part of this project, the Tunisian partner in the ECOSAFIMED project, the National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies, organised launching sessions in Kélibia, Tabarka and Bizerte on 27 February, 19 March and 2 of April 2015 respectively. These were meetings intended for regional and local stakeholders, including fishermen, local authority representatives and NGOs to present the project and announce preliminary results, the relevance of co-operation between all stakeholders, and the economic and environmental benefits of good fishing practices. It was also an opportunity to gather information from some highly experienced people.

### **Interview with Ahmed Grafi, a lobster fisherman from Sidi Daoud, Nabeul Governorate, Tunisia**

**Mr Grafi, would you give us more details about your métier?**

At Sidi Daoud port in Nabeul Governorate there are ten boats fishing for spiny lobster, all equipped with electronic devices (GPS, echosounder). Of these, four boats target *Spiny lobster* around Esquerquis Banks, from 1 March to 15 September.

Every boat has eight or nine 450m-long trammel nets; each net consists of ten small nets around 50m long. We use spiny lobster fishing nets, which have a mesh size of 70mm.



Ahmed Grafi, a fisherman from Sidi Daoud port at the informative session in Kélibia (February 2015)

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### **Do you agree with new recommendations for managing fisheries drawn up with your help that will be released at the end of the ECOSAFIMED project?**

Of course, I'm totally in! What would I leave behind for my sons – just a boat? It makes no sense if there is nothing left to fish. I think it's a good initiative, and I'm happy to contribute to help achieve our common goal. It is becoming harder for us fishermen to make a living. To get a decent catch, we need to go further, use more fuel, and spend longer at sea. Fish and lobster catches are falling – I'm sure it's strongly related to the state of the seabed. So the new management guidelines are really needed and will be very useful in promoting responsible fishing and should help into the conservation of marine biological resources.

### **What do you think about this informative day and the ECOSAFIMED project?**

Personally, I think that during this informative day we become aware of the need for co-operation between all stakeholders in the artisanal fishing sector. Involving all parties is crucial and we don't often get the chance to gather and discuss our concerns.

**Interview with Mohamed Hedi Jaziri, a lobster fisherman from Bizerte, Bizerte Governorate, Tunisia**

**Mr Mohamed, would you give us more details about your métier?**

I have been working as a fisherman for more than 30 years, including 25 years targeting *Spiny lobster*. In Bizerte, there are around 20 fishing boats that specialize in lobster fishing. We start the professional fishing in area of La Galite island. Later, some of the fishermen head to Esquerquis Bank area, while I stay more around La Galite, as its small port provides shelter in bad weather conditions. I use trammel nets called *mbatten* in Tunisia, with a mesh size of 80cm.



Hauling lobster trammel net at Esquerquis Bank (May 2015)

**Mr Mohamed, what do you think about the ECOSAFIMED project ?**

I'm glad the project exists. As a seafarer I feel like I live in and by the sea. Better management of our resource (the sea) is a key issue for the sustainability of the artisanal fishing sector. If this project succeeds, it will give us and the next generation of artisanal fishermen a second chance to make a living from the sea in the future. Young people today are abandoning this fishing sector. As they say: you put in a lot of effort for a steadily shrinking reward. ECOSAFIMED aims for sustainable artisanal fisheries, which should be the goal of every fisherman. But we need the project to include more artisanal fishermen. In fact, what is the point of reaching management agreements with some of us while other spiny lobster fishermen can do whatever they want.

**Interview with Mr Bechir Afifi, in charge of ECOSAFIMED project in the Ministry of Development and International Cooperation in Tunisia (National Focal Point of CBCMED projects)**

**Can you give us an overview about ECOSAFIMED project from your point of view?**

Sure, in this project the Tunisian partner is The National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies. The project is funded by European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument which is a Multilateral Cross-Border Cooperation Initiative (ENPI-CBC-Med) implemented in 14Mediterranean countries, namely Tunisia.

Financially, ECOSAFIMED Tunisian partner has received 50% of total budget. As a Ministry we supervise the whole procedure of the project.



Mr Bechir Afifi, head of the ECOSAFIMED project in the Ministry of Development and International Co-operation in Tunisia

In socioeconomic terms, the importance and originality of such project has been obvious from the beginning. The Ministry of Development and International Cooperation is providing full support of the effective implementation of ECOSAFIMED, and is addressing key issues on biodiversity conservation in the Mediterranean and in the artisanal fishing sector, one of the backbones of our economy in local coastal areas. Specifically, it is having a positive impact on environmental awareness of both local fishermen and the administrative authorities with regard to the sustainability of artisanal fisheries. Besides ECOSAFIMED, we are in charge of 49 other ENPI projects involving 72 Tunisian partners. We are currently preparing the next generation of projects, starting in 2017.

**Interview with Mr Mehrez Besta, head of the General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DGPA: Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Fisheries) in Tunisia**

**What is your opinion on the impact of this kind of project (ECOSAFIMED) at the national and Mediterranean level?**

ECOSAFIMED is a pioneering project with an innovative, participative approach that targets artisanal fisheries in northern Tunisia and seeks to learn more of fishermen's needs and concerns. Fishermen are always looking to increase their catches. There is no doubt their activity is in danger of extinction due to higher fishing pressure and decreasing livestock, while also competing with wealthy fishermen. I think this feeling is common to all artisanal fishermen around the Mediterranean.



Mr Mehrez Besta, head of the General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DGPA) in Tunisia

This project also gives artisanal fishermen the chance to explain coastal fishery problems in their own words, and try to find solutions. It is also a mark of appreciation, as fishermen can see that their view is valued. Fishermen also realise that although the fishing gears they use are not destructive, their activity can have a negative impact on the benthic habitats and future catches if good fishing practices are not respected. Thanks to this project, video footage of benthic communities was taken by the ROV and for the first time fishermen could see the effects of trawling.

From the Tunisian side, this project has increased awareness among artisanal fishermen about the importance of conserving benthic communities to the sustainability of their activity. There is no doubt that these fishermen will spread the information that they have acquired among others. I do think this project has

the same impact on other study areas in the Mediterranean. The DGPA is happy to assist with a project like this that promotes good fishing practices.

**Interview with Mr Mohamed Gabsi, Head of the Tunisian Union for Agriculture and Fisheries**



Mr Mohamed Gabsi, Head of the Tunisian Union for Agriculture and Fisheries

**What impact can fishing management guidelines have on the conservation of fisheries and the ecosystem?**

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Basically, fishing management guidelines will help to rationalise the use of marine resources for both artisanal and industrial fishermen, as well as contributing to sector sustainability. Also, let's not forget the socioeconomic impact that these guidelines will have. Fishermen are looking for ways to earn more money. They are never going to adopt guidelines that would decrease their catches. The ECOSAFIMED project has provided an opportunity of dialogue between different stakeholders. This participatory approach has more potential and is a more effective way of ensuring sustainable fishing practices are adopted than using government regulation and enforcement or a top-down transfer of technology.

**How can artisanal fishermen promote and help with the conservation of the marine environment**

It is a big challenge. Why would a fishermen adopt good fishing practices when others don't? It is a long process of raising awareness that affects all sectors, not just fishing. I think that strengthening the feeling of cohesion and collaboration between fishermen would be the first step to contributing to the sustainable

development, promotion and management of coastal fishing.

## ECOSAFIMED study area: Minorca Channel, Spain

### Selection of the study area within Minorca Channel

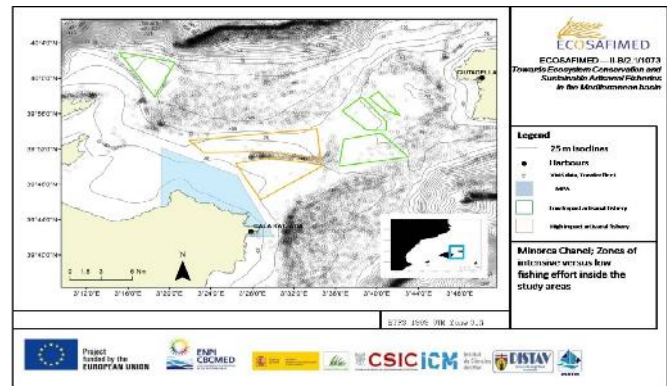
The selection of study areas was the first step in assessing the impact of artisanal fisheries in the ENPI regions preselected by the ECOSAFIMED project. In Spain, one of the selected areas was the Minorca Channel.

This is a marine area approximately 36km wide, located between the islands of Majorca and Minorca, in the northern part of the Archipelago of the Balearic Islands. With large heterogeneous fishing grounds, this is one of the most important areas in the Balearic Islands. The coastal shelf between the two islands has a maximum depth of 90m and is one of the main areas of maërl beds in the western Mediterranean, with high environmental heterogeneity due to the occurrence of rocky beds, sandy shores, detrital and gravel beds. These fishing grounds show well preserved benthic communities, as a result of the nature of the fleet and the use of multiple *métiers* around the year. Although there is still some trawler fishing, most fishing activity is carried out by an artisanal fleet.

The Minorca Channel is a Site of Community Importance under the EU Habitats Directive. A large Marine Protected Area (MPA) was established in 2007 in the east coast of Majorca; the current surveillance and strong law enforcement is a successful example of co-operation between the administration and fishermen's associations.

Six areas were selected in the Minorca Channel for the study, four in the central part of the channel and two in the west and north-east part.

Three areas were selected as a high fishing effort, all of them quite close to the coast of Majorca, which has a higher number of artisanal boats than in Minorca, so the effort is also greater. The low effort areas are in the middle of the Minorca Channel, and off the north coast of Majorca. Distance to harbour is obviously a key factor in the use of the areas.



Map of the ECOSAFIMED study area in the Minorca Channel, showing high and low fishing effort areas.

### Fisheries in the Minorca Channel

There are two main fishing ports in Minorca : Ciutadella and Maó. and three main ports in the northern part of Majorca (Pollença, Alcudia and Cala Rajada). Some boats from Alcudia and Cala Rajada also dock in three secondary harbours: Cala Bona depending from Cala Rajada harbour, Colonia de Saint Pere and Can Pica fort depending from Alcudia harbour).

In terms of number of boats registered, 87% of the fleet work in artisanal fishing. Trawlers accounted for 11% of the fleet, with 16 boats (four in Cala Rajada, four in Alcudia, four in Ciutadella, three in Maó and one in Pollença). However, they account for approximately 74% of the total tonnage, and 41% of total fishing power in the area.

The artisanal fleet consists of 120 boats and 170 fishermen. Average total boat length is 7.96m, with an average weight of 2.57 tons.

The average age of the vessels was at approximately 30 years old in 2014. Most of the boats are made of fibre glass (58% of the total artisanal fleet).



Artisanal boat 8m long fishing in the middle of the Minorca Channel.

### *Fishing métiers in the Minorca Channel*

A total of 24 fishing *métiers* were identified.

In the fishing grounds of the Minorca Channel the main gears used by the artisanal fishery are trammel nets, longlines and gillnets. Trammel nets are mainly used to catch cuttlefish (*Sepia officinalis*) in winter and early spring, and spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*) and red scorpionfish (*Scorpaenascrofa*) in summer. Gillnets are generally used to catch John Dory (*Zeus faber*) in spring-summer, younger specimens of greater amberjack (*Seriola dumerilii*) in late summer and autumn, and red mullet (*Mullus sp*) in autumn. Bottom longlines are traditionally used to catch mainly *sparidae* species in autumn and winter, and groupers (*Epinephelus sp.*) in summer-autumn, though they are used by some vessels throughout the year, or as a fishing method between seasons for the main target species described above. Jigs for squids are also used as a common complementary fishing method in both summer and winter.

Other gears, such as boat seine net for dolphin fish (*Coryphaena hippurus*) is used in autumn only in the waters of Majorca.

## ECOSAFIMED Events

### Meeting with associates following the 5th Steering Committee Meeting for the ENPI-ECOSAFIMED project in Barcelona (Spain)

The ECOSAFIMED project Steering Committee meeting took place on 21-23 July 2015 in Barcelona. Partners from Spain, Italy and Tunisia presented the preliminary results of the project to the associates on 23 July. Project associates include national and international institutions such as the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and the Environment (MAGRAMA), CNR-IAMC (Messina, Italy), RAC/SPA, IUCN, GFCM-FAO, MedPan and the Tunisian DGPA and UTAP. Associates offered their full collaboration with the various partners to support and disseminate project results, particularly in drawing up sound, science-based management guidelines, considering the high potential for project impact and replicability among public institutions, fishermen and the general public at both in the Mediterranean basin and beyond.



ECOSAFIMED project partners and associates contributing to international marine policies attend the meeting held at the Marine Science Institute of Spain's Scientific Research Council, 23 July 2015, Tunisia.

### More information

Webpage

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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 aim of the programme is to promote the sustainable and harmonious cooperation process in the Mediterranean Basin by dealing with common challenges and enhancing the endogenous potential of the programme, which finances cooperation projects as a contribution to economic, social, environmental and cultural development in 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). The programme's official languages are Arabic, English and French ([www.enpicbmed.eu](http://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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