

“Piloting of eco-innovative fishery supply–chains to market added–value Adriatic fish products”

Priority Axis: Blue innovation

1.1 - Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area

D3.3.1 Report on the standardized approach in the pre-assessment process in Italy and Croatia

WP3 - Piloting of sustainable and eco-certified fishery productions/ Act.3.3 - Piloting of selected fisheries production

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1. Introduction

This report, corresponding to deliverable D3.3.1: *Report on the standardized approach in the pre-assessment process in Italy and Croatia* of the Activity 3.3. ‘*Piloting of selected fisheries production*’ of the PRIZEFISH project (Italy-Croatia CBC Program) aims to standardize the procedure and the evaluation criteria to be followed in the pre-assessment and potential certification of Adriatic fisheries in the context of the Adriatic Responsible Fisheries Management (ARFM) certification scheme, developed by the Prizefish project.

The document is divided into two parts:

- **Part I: Outline of the ARFM certification process**, defines the procedures for fishery assessment against the ARFM Fisheries Standard (deliverable 3.2.3: *Sustainability guidelines*), providing a summary of what should happen in each step of the certification process;
- **Part II: ARFM core criteria and possible measures**, is intended to give examples of **what the Evaluation Group shall check** in each Specific Indicator during the ARFM assessment process and to indicate **corrective measures or actions that may be taken** whenever gaps or weaknesses in a fishery’s performance are identified, in order to meet the ARFM requirements or to maintain the certification.

Part II will serve, firstly, as a guidance to conduct the pre-assessment of the fisheries that have been already selected during the mapping phase (Activity 3.1) and the following consultation meetings with the relevant fishing operators in both the Italian and the Croatian side of the Adriatic Sea (Activity 3.2) of the Prizefish project, as potential ‘candidate sustainable fisheries’ to start an Adriatic Responsible Fishery Management (ARFM) certification process. The results of pre-assessments will be incorporated, as regards the Italian fisheries selected, in deliverable 3.3.2: *Report of the pre-assessment of relevant fisheries in Italy*, and, as regards the Croatian fisheries, in deliverable 3.3.3: *Report of the pre-assessment of relevant fisheries in Croatia*. It is important to stress that the pre-assessments do not aim to certify a specific fishery under evaluation but will produce clear indications of the potentiality of a fishery to enter in a certification process. The assessments conducted in the Prizefish framework therefore will determine, at a provisional stage, whether the selected candidate meets the requirements for obtaining an ARFM certificate, but especially to indicate the gaps and weaknesses to be further analyzed in the framework of the action plans (Activity 3.3, deliverable 3.3.4).

Since the accomplishment of the PRIZEFISH objectives, there would be the possibility that Adriatic RFM Standard would be formally registered in the region and would be updated as a matter of process and procedure. Therefore, if interest is shown in issuing such certificate, implementing documents and detailed procedures and templates will be developed in the context of the new ARFM certification programme, on the basis of the conceptual procedural framework contained in **Part I** and of the evaluation criteria outlined in **Part II**. It is worth noting that in the framework of Prizefish independent experts will be hired to perform the pre-assessment mentioned above and that a Certification Body as referred below (see Part I, paragraph 1 and hereinafter) is not present at the moment since it will be established once the ARFM programme will be formally registered.

The ARFM Certification process and criteria were conceived bearing in mind the set of principles and requirements of the most-well known and globally recognized certification programmes already existing at international and regional level, with particular reference to the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and the Alaska Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Certification Program (see the list of reference documents in the section 'References').

In particular, as stressed during the consultation meetings performed in the framework of Activity 3.2 (see deliverables 3.2.1 and 3.2.2) the ARFM certification process developed in the framework of Prizefish could 'anticipate' at regional level some elements increasingly included in MSC standards, such as social aspects and new issues related to environmental protection (e.g. reduction of marine plastic waste). Therefore, the ARFM programme could help in identifying some Adriatic 'responsible' fisheries, ready to be certified 'ARFM', and prepare them to get also, at a later stage, a MSC certification as 'sustainable' fisheries, after having obtained and maintained the ARFM certification several years and improved their performance within the ARFM programme.

Part 1: Outline of the ARFM Certification process

This section defines the procedure to be used to assess a fishery against the ARFM Fisheries Standard. The ARFM process consists of six (6) major steps, pointed up in the diagram below. After having obtained the ARFM certificate, the fishery enters in a surveillance process, with audits performed every two years. Re-evaluation can occur within eight (8) years from the granting of the last certificate.



Fig. 1. The ARFM Certification process

1. APPLICATION

This step includes:

- ✓ selection of the Certification Body. The Certification Body, as it will be detailed below (see paragraph 1), is an independent certifier who is responsible to conduct the assessment and to determine whether the fishery meets the ARFM standards. Once the ARFM programme will be registered in the region, a list of possible certification bodies accredited within the ARFM will be developed to provide the Applicant with an overview of possible options.
- ✓ Consistency Check;
- ✓ Definition of a contract between the Applicant and the Certification Body.

2. PRELIMINARY EVALUATION (optional)

The aim of this stage is to highlight potential challenges and issues that may affect the certification process. Before entering the in-depth evaluation, the applicant can be requested to undertake certain actions to improve the fishery's performance.

3. IN DEPTH EVALUATION

This stage is at the core of the certification process. It includes stakeholders consultation, site visit, assessment review by external experts and ends with the attribution of a score.

4. CERTIFICATION

The assessment process ends with a formal decision. The fishery can become ARFM certified (1); ARFM certified subject to the development and implementation of an action plan (2) or fail the certification (3).

5. PROGRESS MONITORING

The ARFM certification will expiry eight (8) years from the date of granting. During this period, the fishery is submitted every two years to surveillance audits and, depending on the final score, must make improvements required as condition for maintaining the certification.

6. RE-EVALUATION (optional)

It occurs within 8 years from the date of granting of the last certificate.

1. Key actors involved

The ARFM certification procedure involves various parties with different roles and responsibilities:

- **The Applicant:** a fishing enterprise, a Producer Organization (PO), a fishing association or a group of fishing organizations that submits a formal application for the assessment and certification of their fishery within the ARFM. The applicant shall be established under Italian or Croatian law and have legal personality. The main responsibilities of the Applicant include: (1) entering into a contract with an accredited Certification Body; (2) sustain the costs of certification; (3) providing the Certification Body with the relevant data that are needed for the assessment; (4) after having obtained the ARFM certificate, implementing any improvements (conditions) required.
- **The Certification Body (CB):** The ARFM assessment is conducted by an independent certifier, who is responsible for conducting the entire assessment and for determining whether the fishery meets the ARFM Standard. This entails, among others tasks, the establishment of the 'Evaluation Group', composed by independent experts, which will perform the scoring of the fishery.
- **Stakeholders:** Individuals and/or organizations who are in some way connected with the fishery in question and take part in different stages of the assessment process (see paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 below). These actors are responsible for providing the Evaluation Group with well-grounded arguments and reliable information on the impacts of the fishery or/and other matters within their competence.
- **External reviewers:** External experts selected to review the *Fishery report card* (see paragraph 2.3 below). These professionals are in charge of providing their qualified opinion on the conclusions reached by the Evaluation Group in the provisional scoring of each Specific Indicator.

2. Stages of the ARFM assessment process (in detail)

The setting-up of a common procedure, from application to certification, seeks to ensure that all the

applicants to the ARFM are treated in a consistent, objective and equitable manner by the Certification Bodies accredited to perform the ARFM evaluation. However, each Certification Body can decide whether to fully use the procedure here outlined or to incorporate its main steps/core principles into its own already existing procedures.

2.1. Application

In the initial stage, the potential Applicant shall select the Certification Body that will undertake the fishery evaluation. Once the ARFM programme will be registered in the region, a list of independent certifiers accredited to perform the ARFM assessment will be developed so that potential applicants will have a range of options, among which they could select the Certification Body most suited for the assessment of their fishery.

Once contacted by the potential Applicant, the Certification Body shall discuss the key elements of the application, including:

- Target species;
- Catch methods/gear;
- All relevant details on the organization of the Applicant (company/ies size, legal form, main activities and business);
- Average time of the process.

Eligible geographical areas are GSA17 and GSA18. After discussion of the primary elements of the Application, the CB shall require the Applicant to submit an **ARFM programme Application Form** and an **ARFM Applicant Checklist**. The Application form shall contain, at least, all reference information of the applicant (company HQ, home address, telephone etc.) and the identification of the fishery (as combination of species/gear) and geographical area. The Checklist shall contain, at least, reference to: stock assessment reports, recent scientific advice, landings data, information on the vessels pursuing the fishery (including catch methods and gears and available catch or effort data), employment contracts and conditions practiced, a free section to be filled with other reports, maps and relevant documents.

The CB shall assign an identification number to the Application and shall then notify the receipt to the Applicant.

(a) Consistency Check

As a preliminary step, the CB shall confirm that the concerned fishery is not conducted against the basic principles and values of the ARFM programme, which must be assessed in accordance with the following criteria:

Fisheries which cannot be covered by the ARFM

- **Fisheries likely to incur in by-catch of amphibians, reptiles, birds and/or mammals.**
 - **Fisheries using poison or explosives.**
 - **Fishing operators that have been condemned (or accused of) human rights violations, notably forced and child labour violations, within the last three years.**
 - **Fisheries conducted in waters where fishing rights are questioned because of border disputes.**
-

Aquaculture activities are not eligible to apply to the ARFM programme.

(b) Definition of the contract

If the fishery passes the consistency check, the Application is accepted by the CB. The Applicant and the Certification Body must sign an agreement (contract), containing at least the indication of the Component of Evaluation, CoE (= The Fishery) and of the Component of Accreditation, CoA (=The Fisher/group of Fishers), the indicative timeframe of the process and a provisional setting of the costs.

2.2. Preliminary evaluation (optional)

Once the Application has been accepted, the ARFM process enters in a preliminary evaluation stage. Preliminary evaluation is an optional stage of the procedure, since the Applicant may choose to go directly to the in-depth evaluation of the fishery, under the next step of the procedure. However, pre-evaluation is strongly recommended in general and it can be required by the CB for all Applicants who did not provide enough information (to be evaluated on the basis of the checklist preliminary submitted).

In this stage, the CB shall make a preliminary estimate of the extent to which the fishery is consistent with the ARFM Standard. The CB shall form a 'preliminary Evaluation Group' to conduct the analysis. This analysis is based on a provisional, not yet complete, set of data provided by the Applicant and it may include an exchange (physical meeting or also by remote) between the Applicant and the Certification Body, as well as preliminary site visits and consultation of stakeholders.

The findings of the preliminary evaluation are used by the evaluation group to draw up a **Preliminary evaluation report**. The Report tells the Applicant whether it is likely to achieve certification and identifies the potential weaknesses and relevant issues that need to be addressed. The Applicant, shall use the report to adapt and prepare its fishery to enter in the next stage of the procedure, where a more extensive and detailed analysis is conducted. This would mean, for instance, that the Applicant must integrate and prepare all the available information needed for the in-depth evaluation and/or undertake actions to address the critical issues raised in the report. Note that in the pre-evaluation the fishery can be scored at level of the ARFM fundamental principles (1. Governance; 2. Environment; 3. Socio-economic) and not necessarily against each Specific Indicator.

2.3. In-depth evaluation

The CB shall inform the Applicant that the fishery is entering a full evaluation and shall appoint a (new) Evaluation Group. The in-depth evaluation shall include:

- Stakeholders’ consultation;
- site visits;
- Marking of the fishery with the attribution of a score in each Specific Indicator;
- Review by external experts.

Firstly, the CB shall announce to stakeholders that the fishery is undergoing an in-depth evaluation, through the publication of a **Report to Stakeholders** on the ARFM website. Stakeholders can provide written inputs within 30 days.

The CB shall then organize a site visit at the Applicant premises; relevant stakeholders will be invited to participate.

Based on the information and evidence collected, the Evaluation Group shall mark the fishery performance against the ARFM standard, attributing a score to each Specific Indicator. Results of the marking are reported in a **Fishery Report card**, containing a provisional determination of whether the fishery should be/not should be certified. The *Fishery Report card* is examined by independent experts (external reviewers), which are pulled from a shortlist drawn up by the ARFM, and then by the Applicant. This stage ends with an **External reviewers’ report** and a possible **Report of the Applicant** to be attached.

2.4. Certification

During the overall process, the Evaluation Group can ask the Applicant to provide clarification and integration of documentation/evidence and also to undertake corrective actions and/or to develop specific action plans to address, in short time, any non-conformance identified.

After external reviewers’ validation, the *Fishery Report card*, accompanied by statements of reasons explaining the marks awarded, is published on the ARFM website under the name **Provisional Certification Report - open to Public Comments**. Stakeholders previously involved have 30 days to submit inputs.

The CB shall then compile a *Final Certification Report*, containing a **Certification decision**. There are three possible options:

- 1) The fishery is certified ARFM;
- 2) The fishery is certified ARFM, subject to an action plan;
- 3) The fishery is not certified.

The CB shall notify the Applicant in writing of its decision within 7 working days. In case 2), the certificate will not be issued until the Applicant has accepted conditions and provided a detailed **Action plan** to address non-conformance, in accordance with the timeline established in the Report. The plan is submitted to the Evaluation Group for approval.

In case 1), and in case 2) after approval, the ARFM certificate is issued to the Applicant by the CB.

2.5. Progress monitoring

The ARFM certification period lasts up for 8 years, starting from the date of issue of the certificate. During this period, the fishery is submitted every two years to surveillance audits and must undertake corrective actions and/or make the improvements required/or recommended to remain certified.

Audits in case 1) (see paragraph 2.4. above) are aimed at ensure that a certified fishery continues to meet the ARFM standards and even improve its performance.

In case 2), audits are aimed to review the fishery’s progress and to monitor the implementation of the action plan. Each Audit requires the assignment of an Audit team and it may involve check of (new) information, site visits and stakeholders’ consultation. An **Audit Report** is produced at the end, outlining results and the next actions to be undertaken.

The certification can be suspended if the CB determines, after notification to the Applicant and insufficient actions undertaken, that the fishery no longer meet the ARFM requirements.

2.6. Re-evaluation

Re-evaluation process should start before the fourth anniversary of the last-issued certificate, so that the validity of the new certificate starts from the five-year expiry of the previous.

2.7. Marking system (to be used in the in-depth evaluation stage)

The Standard developed in the framework of the Prizefish process (deliverable 3.2.3: *Sustainability guidelines*) focus on 3 Key principles or components or pillars for evaluating fisheries:

1. **GOVERNANCE**
2. **ENVIRONMENT**
3. **SOCIO-ECONOMIC**

Components 1-3 in turn contain nine Supporting Articles (SA), each made up of **Specific Indicators (SI)**, which are used to evaluate the full, partial or non compliance with detailed rules (Table 1). During the ARFM process, the Evaluation Group shall evaluate each fishery’s performance against the standards, examining in each Specific Indicator the key-elements set out in the criteria outlined in the second part of this report (see Part II). Therefore, the Specific Indicator is the ‘reference unit’ to be used to estimate the level of compliance of a fishery with the standards requested by the ARFM.

Table 1 – Structure of the Adriatic RFM Standards

Components	Supporting Articles (SA)	Specific Indicators (SI)
GOVERNANCE (1)	1.1. There shall be a structured and legally mandated management system based upon and respecting international,	1.1.1. Legislation
		1.1.2. Cooperation

ENVIRONMENT (2)	national, and local fishery laws, for the responsible utilization of the target stock and conservation of the marine environment.	
	1.2. A clear decision-making process is part of the management system to achieve the objectives foreseen by international, national, and local fishery laws and has an appropriate approach to avoid conflicts.	1.2.1. Environmental policies 1.2.2. Management plan or a set of management measures
	1.3.	
	2.1. There shall be an effective fishery data (dependent and independent) collection and analysis system for stock management purposes.	2.1.1. Data collection/ Statistics
	2.2. To support its optimum utilization, there shall be regular stock assessment activities appropriate for the fishery resource—its range, the species biology, and the ecosystem—all undertaken in accordance with acknowledged scientific standards.	2.2.1. Institutional framework 2.2.2. Data limited approach
SOCIO-ECONOMIC (3)	2.3. Management actions and measures for the conservation of stock and the aquatic environment shall be based on the precautionary approach. Where information is deficient, a suitable method using risk assessment shall be adopted to take into account uncertainty.	2.3.1. Precautionary approach 2.3.2. Absence of information
	2.4. Considerations of fishery interactions and their effects on the ecosystem shall be based on best available science, local knowledge where it can be objectively verified, and a risk-based management approach to determine the most probable adverse impacts. Adverse impacts on the fishery on the ecosystem shall be appropriately assessed and effectively addressed.	2.4.1 Ecosystem impacts 2.4.2. Food web
	3.1. The economic, social, and cultural value of resources (e.g. where a fishery is based on local traditions) shall be assessed in order to assist decision making on their use.	3.1.1. Economic conditions
	3.2. Excess fishing capacity shall be avoided and exploitation of the stocks shall remain economically viable.	3.2.1. Capacity indicators

3.3. The fishery activity shall work in full compliance with international laws on labour and human rights. 3.3.1. Human rights and safety on board

In each Specific Indicator, the evaluation is organized at two levels: the first is the assessment of ‘the Fishery’ for which the application was submitted - assessment component (CoE), and the second is the assessment of the condition of a formal candidate for certification (namely the ‘Applicant’ or the ‘Fisher’/group of Fishers) - accreditation component (CoA). More specifically:

- **The Component of Evaluation (CoE) – ‘The Fishery’:** considers primarily the species which makes up the principal target of the fishery and specifies the fishery under assessment, the gear type/s employed and the key management organization/s within GSA 17 and/or GSA 18. Associated non-target species in the CoE do not form part of the certified species claim. Therefore, the CoE is the reference framework, which include all the vessels practicing the fisheries concerned in the concerned area (GSA 17 and/or GSA 18).
- **Component of Accreditation (CoA) – ‘The Fisher/group of Fishers’:** is a subgroup of the CoE and is constituted by a group of vessel (or even a single vessel) targeting the same species of the CoE and using the same gear of the CoE active in a specific geographical area where the fishery is exerted within GSA17 and/or GSA 18.

The CoA is the formal candidate applicant to enter in the certification process (from a single fisherman to an entire fleet coordinated, for example, by a Producer Organization – PO or to the entire CoE).

To determine the performance of a fishery, the Evaluation group shall score each Specific Indicator at level of CoE and at level of CoA using the following grid, with clear rationales being provided at each step:

Table 2 – ARFM Marking system

ARFM marking grid				
CoE	2	3	4	5
CoA	2	3	4	5
Final mark (CoE + CoA)	4	6	8	10
Level of compliance	Low Confidence Rating	Medium Confidence Rating	Medium/High Confidence Rating	High Confidence Rating

For each Specific Indicator, the final mark shall be based on the sum of the two individual scores given separately for the CoE and for the CoA.

In order to be certified, a fishery must score ≥ 6 (CoE + CoA) for each of the 14 Specific Indicators as well as an average of 8 out of 10 (CoE + CoA) across all Specific Indicators under each of the three key components. Indeed, a Specific Indicator can score, for instance:

3(CoE level) + 2 (CoA level) = 5 (Final mark). $5 < 6$ so the fishery fails in this Specific Indicator.

or

4(CoE level) + 3 (CoA level) = 7 (Final mark). $7 > 6$ so the minimum threshold is achieved in this Specific Indicator.

If the fishery is scored between 6 and 7 for any Specific Indicator, the Applicant is required to improve the fishery's performance against that Indicator by means of an action plan, so that it will get 8 or above within 5 years. This leads the fishery being certified ARFM 'subject to an action plan' (see paragraph 2.4. above).

Whenever a Specific Indicator needs to be scored only at level of CoE or CoA and not at both, it is scored directly on the scale 4, 6, 8, 10.

Part 2: ARFM core criteria and possible measures

In the second part of this Report, the ARFM requirements are explained at the level of each Specific Indicator. For each SI, two elements are taken into account:

- **What assessors check:** this section is intended to provide an insight of the types of documents and sources of information that can be used by the Evaluation Group at both the CoE and the CoA level to evaluate a fishery performance against the ARFM Standard.
- **Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance:** this part is intended to outline example actions that can/should be developed at CoE level and undertaken by the Applicant at CoA level (notably through the development of a specific action plan) in order to address the weaknesses and inconsistencies identified in the fishery performance.

The examples and evaluation criteria provided here will serve as a guidance to conduct the pre-assessment of the Adriatic fisheries selected in the framework of the Activity 3.1 (mapping phase) and of the Activity 3.2 (consultation meetings) of the Prizefish project (D3.3.2: *Report of the pre-assessment of relevant fisheries in Italy* and D3.3.3: *Report of the pre-assessment of relevant fisheries in Croatia* respectively). Should the Adriatic RFM Standards certification scheme be registered in the region, they could also constitute a reference document to perform the 'In depth Evaluation' of applicant Adriatic fisheries, i.e. the 'third step' of the ARFM certification process. Several examples of good practice proposed are taken from the actions implemented by fisheries around the world to meet the requirements of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification (see the MSC Capacity Building Toolkit, 2016).

Please note that the examples and criteria here outlined do not cover all the situations that may come across when assessing a fishery against the ARFM Standards. There may be other ways in which a fishery can demonstrate consistency with a Specific Indicator as well as a wider range of measures which may be undertaken to improve a fishery's performance.

1. Governance

The Fisheries Management System is efficient and adaptive with clear objectives in term of sustainability and can assure monitoring, control and surveillance on fishing activities.

Supporting article 1.1

There shall be a structured and legally mandated management system based upon and respecting international, national, and local fishery laws, for the responsible utilization of the target stock and conservation of the marine environment.

FAO CCRF¹ (1995) 7.1.3/7.1.4/7.1.9/7.3.1/7.3.2/7.3.4/7.6.8/7.7.1/

Specific Indicator	What assessors check	Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance
<p>1.1.1 Legislation</p> <p>There shall be an effective legal and administrative framework established at international, European, national and local levels appropriate for fishery resource conservation and management. The management system and the fishery operate in compliance with the requirements of international, national, and local laws and regulations, including the requirements of any regional and/or international fisheries management agreement.</p> <p>FAO CCRF (1995) 7.7.1 FAO Eco (2009) 28</p>	<p>At CoE level, the Evaluation Group shall ascertain whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the fishery is covered by a Fishery policy developed at the EU level, aiming at fostering the conservation of marine biological resources, the organization of the market, the development of coastal communities and blue growth and at strengthening international ocean governance; ▪ in the framework of EU legislation, specific rules are dedicated to the fishery concerned, e.g. the ban of fishing in specific areas to protect habitats, minimum sizes, exceptions to landing obligation, classification of fishing gears etc.; ▪ An effective national legal system is in place. In particular, there is evidence of domestic implementation of EU and international law; ▪ Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMO) conservation and management measures apply to the fishery; ▪ There are administrative bodies (international, national, regional, and/or EU) responsible for the conservation and management of the fishery in consideration, for allocating funds and for the implementation of the legal and policy framework established at international and EU level (i.e. GFCM measures, EU Common Fisheries Policy etc). 	<p>Actions that the Evaluation Group would recommend or consider are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At CoE level: inform the competent authorities of the gaps identified, asking for modification of national/EU legislation/policy frameworks and/or procedures. If the Applicant and/or other eligible fishers/entities within the CoE are advocating/have advocated for introduction, enactment, or improvement of legislation, this can be regarded positively in the evaluation procedure. – At CoA level: setting up an action plan to undertake corrective actions aiming at improving compliance with rules (including, if appropriate, investments on the vessels, on equipments, fishing gears etc).

	<p>At CoA level, the Evaluation Group shall ascertain whether the applicant operates in compliance with the requirements of national, EU and international law, to be evaluated on the basis of several elements such as: the number of infringement procedures and imposed sanctions, Coast Guard inspections, reports and other relevant data etc.</p>	
Specific Indicator	What assessors check	Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance
<p>1.1.2 Cooperation Where transboundary, shared, straddling, highly migratory, or high seas fish stocks are exploited by two or more countries (neighboring or not), the applicant and appropriate management organizations concerned shall cooperate and take part in the formal fishery commission or arrangements appointed to ensure effective conservation and management of the stock(s) in question and their environment.</p>	<p>Where the fishery concerned relies on a transboundary (shared) stock, the Evaluation Group shall ascertain whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At CoE level, there are EU and/or international bodies/organizations which promote cooperation and allow fishery discussions or arrangements in order to ensure effective conservation and management of the stock and fishery in question. In particular, cooperation involve collection and sharing of data, assessment of status of stocks and development of scientific advice. - At CoA level, the applicant contributes, as stakeholder, to formal fishery discussions or arrangements that have been agreed at regional and/or international level to ensure effective conservation and management of the stock and fishery in question, and complies with those arrangements. <p>Examples at both the two level of evaluation may include evidence of formal agreements, records of meetings, reports submitted to bodies/organisations, existence and effective participation in and implementation of international cooperation projects on sustainable fisheries and environmental issues.</p>	<p>Actions that the Evaluation Group would recommend or consider are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At CoE level, the group shall consider the effectiveness of mechanisms in place for collection and sharing of data, assessment of stock status and development of scientific advice, taking into account also the efforts undertaken by organizations/bodies to address possible critical issues. - At CoA level, through analysis of website and public material, the group will evaluate the extent to which bodies/organisations are able to clearly identify their role and responsibilities, clearly explain how consultation procedures work and how information collected from stakeholders are used. The evaluation group may also consult other fishing enterprises and other stakeholders to ascertain the extent to which the functions and responsibilities of the different bodies/organizations are well understood by them. Based on these outcomes, the Applicant can be requested to clearly identify in its management documents/plans the need for effective consultation and detail how and when this will be done.

Supporting article 1.2

A clear decision-making process is part of the management system to achieve the objectives foreseen by international, national, and local fishery laws and has an appropriate approach to avoid conflicts.

FAO CCRF (1995) 10.1.1, 10.1.2, 10.1.4, 10.2.1, 10.2.2, 10.2.4

Specific Indicator	What assessors check	Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance
<p>1.2.1 Environmental policies Within the fisheries management organization's jurisdiction, an appropriate policy, legal, and institutional framework shall be adopted in order to achieve sustainable and integrated use of living marine resources, allowing for determination of the possible uses of resources and governing access to them. FAO CCRF (1995) 10.1.1, 10.1.3, 10.2.3</p>	<p>The Evaluation Group shall ascertain whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At CoE level, there is an appropriate policy, legal and institutional framework in place, in order to achieve sustainable and integrated use of living marine resources, allowing for determination of the possible uses of resources and governing access to them. Examples may include reference to protected areas established in the Adriatic Sea as well as to policy documents and normative frameworks established at the EU, international and national level concerning protection of marine environment, with specific reference to the achievement of Good environmental status (GES) in the framework of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). - At CoA level, the group shall evaluate the level of compliance of the applicant with the policy, legal and institutional framework. In particular, the applicant can be requested to provide information on actions and investments undertaken to contribute to the achievement of environmental objectives. The adoption of voluntary sustainable management measures for resource and environment can also be considered in the rating. 	<p>Actions that the Evaluation Group would recommend or consider are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At CoE level, inform the competent environmental authorities of the gaps identified, asking for modification of national/EU legislation/policy frameworks and/or procedures. If the Applicant and/or other eligible fishers/entities within the CoE are advocating/have advocated for introduction, enactment, or improvement of environmental legislation and policies, this can be regarded positively in the assessment. - At CoA level, setting up an action plan to undertake corrective actions aiming at improving compliance with environmental rules and contribution to policies objectives (including, for instance, waste management to avoid gear lost and marine litter collection).
<p>1.2.2 Management plan or a set of management measures Long-term management objectives shall be translated into a plan or other management document and be subscribed to by all interested parties. FAO CCRF (1995) 7.3.3 FAO ECO (2009) 28.1</p>	<p>The Evaluation Group shall ascertain whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At CoE level, scientifically based long-term management objectives consistent with the sustainable use of the resource are translated into a plan or other management document which is subscribed to by all interested parties. - At CoA level, the applicant will be requested to demonstrate the level of compliance with the plan (i.e. absence of infringement procedures or remedy actions undertaken in case of etc). 	<p>The content of management plans or other set of management measures can be improved by incorporating, for instance, reference to more overarching high level objectives. Another action could be to undertake periodically consultation with stakeholders (NGOs) on proposed long term objectives. Furthermore, management plans or other management measures could be reviewed periodically in order to understand the extent to which long term objectives are being adhered to, to ensure that the objectives are achieving their aims. Consider changes to objectives, or changes to the degree to which they are required to be considered.</p>

2. Environment

Science based assessment of the status of the target resources and the ecosystem that hosts them, considering the specific impact of the fishing activity.

Supporting article 2.1

There shall be an effective fishery data (dependent and independent) collection and analysis system for stock management purposes.

Specific Indicator	What assessors check	Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance
<p>2.1.1 Data collection and statistics All significant fishery removals and mortality of the target species shall be considered by management. Specifically, reliable and accurate data required for assessing the status of fishery and ecosystems, including data on retained catch and discards shall be collected. These data shall be collected, at an appropriate time and level of aggregation, by relevant management organizations and provided to relevant fisheries organizations.</p> <p>FAO CCRF (1995) 7.3.1, 7.4.6, 7.4.7, 12.4 FAO Eco (2009) 29.1-29.3</p>	<p>The Evaluation Group shall ascertain whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At CoE level, there is a process or system that allows for effective data collection (including data on retained catch, bycatch, discards and waste) on the status of fisheries and ecosystems for management purposes. Assessors shall acknowledge and explain eventual challenges related to difficult monitoring and data collection, in accordance with applicable international standards and practices. They also shall consider the existence/or not of a website dedicated to National Plans for data collection; - At CoA level, whether the applicant contributes or can contribute to the collection of reliable and accurate data that can help for management purposes. 	<p>Actions that the Evaluation Group would recommend or consider to improve data collection are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At CoE level, improved coordination to avoid the same data being collected multiple times, ensure safe storage in databases, ensure greater data availability. Assessors shall take into account whether a legislative review to address those or similar issues is in progress or was recently terminated. The group also can consider whether steps have been undertaken to create (or update) a website dedicated to national data collection system, in order to improve the accessibility of data to interested public. Furthermore, in data collection, IUU fishing should be counted also in relation to recreational fisheries; - At CoE level, identify where are there gaps in existing data with regards to the need of future management. For this purpose, scientific observes could be invited onboard in the framework of 'Observer onboard programmes', aimed at fostering the contribution of individual fishermen to data collection.

Supporting article 2.2		
To support its optimum utilization, there shall be regular stock assessment activities appropriate for the fishery resource—its range, the species biology, and the ecosystem—all undertaken in accordance with acknowledged scientific standards.		
Specific Indicator	What assessors check	Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance
e2.2.1 Institutional framework An appropriate institutional framework shall be established to determine the applied research required and its proper use (i.e., assess/evaluate stock assessment model/practices) for fishery management purposes. FAO CCRF 12.2, 12.6	The Evaluation group shall ascertain whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At CoE level, there is an established institutional framework for fishery management purposes that determines applied research needs and use. This research generally includes routine stock(s) and ecosystem assessment reports and peer reviews. – At CoA level, the group takes into account the actual or potential collaboration/participation of the applicant in research efforts (i.e.: involvement of operators in research projects, participation of fishers in partnerships with researchers etc). 	Actions that the Evaluation Group would recommend or consider are those aimed at enhancing participation of the Applicant in fisherman-scientist partnerships (e.g. in the fields of: marine litter collection and analysis; implementation of good practices for biodiversity restoration; monitoring sea conditions etc.).
Specific Indicator	What assessors check	Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance
2.2.2 Data limited approach Less elaborate stock assessment methods are frequently used for small-scale, data poor stocks or low-value capture fisheries resulting in greater uncertainty about the status of the stock under consideration. A more precautionary approach to managing fisheries on such resources shall be required, including, where appropriate, a lower level of resource utilization. A record of good management performance may be considered as supporting evidence of the adequacy of the management system.	For small scale-fisheries, when the stock assessment methods are less elaborate and there is uncertainty about the status of the stock in consideration, the Evaluation Group shall ascertain whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At CoE level, there is evidence for the application of more precautionary approaches to managing fisheries (e.g. lower exploitation rates); – At CoA level, the applicant contributes to data collection system by providing reliable and accurate data and operate in compliance with precautionary approach. 	In the case of small scale and lower value fisheries conducting and collecting fishery-independent data is often difficult or the costs cannot be justified. <u>Generally, the less information available, the more precautionary the exploitation will need to be.</u> So, possible actions to secure that more precautionary approach is applied include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increasing the level of knowledge through research, stock assessment and monitoring, using a variety of different assessment methods. Variations in outcomes between different approaches can help

		<p>to refine the process of assessment, to identify uncertainty and enable more informed decisions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – decreasing the amount of fish that is caught to ensure the stock is not overfished. Therefore, in the context of ARFM CoA level assessment, the Applicant can be asked to reduce the amount of fish caught to meet this requirement.
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Supporting article 2.3
 Management actions and measures for the conservation of stock and the aquatic environment shall be based on the precautionary approach. Where information is deficient, a suitable method using risk assessment shall be adopted to take into account uncertainty

Specific Indicator	What assessors check	Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance
2.3.1 Precautionary approach The precautionary approach shall be applied widely to conservation, management, and exploitation of ecosystems to protect and preserve them. This should take due account of fishery enhancement procedures, where appropriate. Absence of scientific information shall not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures. Relevant uncertainties shall be taken into account through a suitable method of risk management, including those associated with the use of introduced or translocated species. <p style="text-align: right;">FAO CCRF (1995) 7.5.2</p>	The Evaluation Group shall ascertain whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At CoE level, the precautionary approach is integrated in stock assessment practices, in specific management measures enacted for everyday fisheries operations, or other measures. Examples may include stock assessment reports, fishery management plans and other documents as reference to EU Common Fisheries Policy and international conventions that the Country has ratified, which commit to the precautionary approach. – At CoA level, the applicant provides data and operates in compliance with measures adopted for precautionary purposes. 	At CoA, the applicant can be asked to introduce in the action plan good practices that demonstrate how precaution is being applied.
Specific Indicator	What assessors check	Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance
2.3.2 Absence of information In the absence of adequate scientific information, appropriate research shall be initiated in a timely fashion. <p style="text-align: right;">FAO CCRF (1995) 7.5.1, 12.3</p>	In the absence of adequate scientific information, the Evaluation Group shall ascertain whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At CoE level, appropriate research have been undertaken to fill the knowledge gap; – At CoA level, the group takes into account the collaboration/participation 	Relevant improvement actions that can be considered or recommended by the Evaluation Group are: At CoE level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – explicit acknowledgement of competent national and regional public institutions of

of the applicant in research efforts.

the need and the interest of developing better fisheries information systems, data management, stock assessment and dissemination of the information on the situation of the marine resources;

- launching of research projects and/or open dialogue for the identification of future research needs, in order to improve the quality and the quantity of information that supports fisheries management.

At CoA level:

- action plan for improvement of the fishery performance can include the commitment of the applicant to take part/enhance participation in research projects, aimed at improving scientific and technical advice on fisheries management.

Supporting article 2.4

Considerations of fishery interactions and their effects on the ecosystem shall be based on best available science, local knowledge where it can be objectively verified, and a risk-based management approach to determine the most probable adverse impacts. Adverse impacts on the fishery on the ecosystem shall be appropriately assessed and effectively addressed.

Specific Indicator	What assessors check	Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance
<p>2.4.1 Ecosystem impacts The most probable adverse impacts of fishery on the ecosystem/environment, shall be assessed and, where appropriate, addressed and/or corrected, taking into account available scientific information. This may take the form of an immediate management response or a further analysis of the identified risk. In the absence of specific information on the ecosystem impacts of fishery under assessment, generic evidence based on similar fishery situations can be used for fisheries with low risk of severe adverse impact. However, the greater the risk, the more specific evidence shall be necessary to ascertain the adequacy of mitigation measures. FAO Eco (2009) 30.4, 31, 31.4 FAO Eco (2011) 41.4</p>	<p>The Evaluation Group shall ascertain whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At CoE level, there is specific information on the ecosystem impacts of fishing and a mechanism in place by which the most probable adverse impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem and environment are assessed using the best available scientific knowledge (which may include traditional knowledge where this is verifiable), and management objectives aimed at avoiding these impacts are developed. Evidence may include stock and ecosystems assessment reports or scientific literature. – At CoA level, whether the applicant is able to implement mitigation measures and cooperate and provide information which are relevant to perform the assessment of the impacts on 	<p>Ecosystem multispecies modelling will be used in this Specific Indicator to assess direct and indirect ecosystem effects of fishing. Through ecosystem models it is possible to estimate indicators of the ecosystem impacts of each fishery. For example, using the sum of absolute values of trophic impacts calculated by input-output analysis and/or using sensitivity analysis on dynamic models the resulting overall impact of each fishing in food web is a measure to evaluate ecosystem impacts of the fishery. A first rough estimation of impact can also be based on information on catches (landings and discards) of the fishery and extrapolating from other areas average ecosystem effects. The ecosystem model can also facilitate the exploration of management policy options. At CoA level, action plan for improvement</p>

	ecosystems.	<p>of the fishery performance can include the adoption of best practice such as, in case of small scale fisheries, the use of selective and low impact gear in order to reduce direct and indirect impacts of fishing, reduce the impact on central species for propagation of impacts), as well as waste management measures to avoid marine litter, avoidance of ghost gears etc.</p> <p>At CoE level, several examples of systemic actions to improve ecosystem approach at the level of the whole fishery can be undertaken, such as: - Review the fishery management regulations and decision-making processes to identify where there is scope to increase explicit consideration of the ecosystem; - Develop ecosystem objectives, which are well defined and measurable, and include these in the fishery management plan; - Promoting consultation with industry and stakeholders on the management plan; - Undertake periodic review and evaluation of the performance of ecosystem management measures/strategies; - Give consideration, in setting up fishing opportunities to the ecosystem impacts of fishing.</p>
Specific Indicator	What assessors check	Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance
<p>2.4.2 Food web</p> <p>The role of the stock under consideration in the food web shall be considered, and if it is a key prey species in the ecosystem, management objectives and measures shall be in place to avoid severe adverse impacts on dependent preys and predators.</p> <p>FAO Eco (2009) 31.2</p>	<p>The Evaluation Group shall ascertain whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At CoE level, there is a mechanism in place by which the role of the stock under consideration in the food web is assessed and monitored, and its relative importance as a key species is determined. If the species is considered by the relevant scientific authority to be an important key species, there shall be specific management objectives relating to minimizing the impacts of the fishery on dependent preys and/or predators. - At CoA level, it should be assessed whether additional management measures are respected by the applicant. 	<p>Ecosystem multispecies modelling will be used in this Specific Indicator to assess ecosystem effects of fishing and explore management policy options, with special emphasis on the role of target species in the food web. Since key and non-redundant roles of species (i.e., redundancy on ecological niche) highlight potential criticalities for the food web, the key role is associated to risk of cascading effects of fishing on the food web and thus to a different level of attention. The key role of species in the food web is estimated through opportune indicators (e.g., per unit biomass keystone-ness). It is worth noting that information on food items (e.g., from isotopic studies) could also assist i) improvement of models, ii) direct estimation of centrality of the species in the food web.</p>

At CoA level, action plan to control the fishing mortality of target species that is identified as having a key role in the food web. In particular, less risky and critical will be the fisheries targeting a well-controlled and precautionary quantity of a resource which shares an ecosystem niche with many other species; higher precautionary levels should be used for resources that have a key role and fill an ecological niche otherwise empty.

At CoE level, role of the target species and the wider ecosystem impacts (both direct and indirect) that the species and its harvest will have; develop monitoring requirements to assure that changes in ecosystem are captured and balanced whenever possible over time and mitigation measures adopted are reaching their objectives.

3. Socio-economic dimension of Adriatic fisheries

Science based assessment of the status of the target resources and the ecosystem that hosts them, considering the specific impact of the fishing activity.

Supporting article 3.1

Economic, social, and cultural value of resources shall be assessed by the appropriate fisheries management organization in order to assist decision making on their use and the fishing activities should be managed in coherence with the objectives of achieving economic, social and employment benefits.

FAO CCRF (1995) 10.2.2

Art. 2, point 1 of the EU Common Fishery Policy Basic Regulation – Reg. (EU) No 1380/2013

Specific Indicator	What assessors check	Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance
<p>3.1.1 Economic conditions The economic conditions under which fishing industries operate shall contribute to a fair standard of living for those who depend on fishing activities. Fisheries under assessment shall promote sustained and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment.</p> <p>Art. 2, point 5 f) of the EU Common Fishery Policy Basic Regulation – Reg. (EU) No 1380/2013</p>	<p>The Evaluation Group shall ascertain whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At CoE level, there is evidence of the economic value of the resource and its benefit to fishermen and coastal communities and that the fishery is carried out responsibly from a social and economic point of view. Evidence can be provided by reports and data on economic aspects of the fisheries sector collected under the National programmes for the collection of data for the fishery sector, in accordance with Regulation (EC) 199/2008, 	<p>Improvements of the economic viability of a fishery can be pursued through a wide range of actions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At CoE level, promote maritime and fisheries training to up-skilling the sector; - set-up a certificate of competence valid throughout the EU which would make easier for fishermen to move between fishing and other maritime occupation; - promote, through social actors and institutions, a better image of fishing as a career

Commission Decision 2016/1251. Long term attention to a fishery/a resource by local communities can be considered also as an economic added value.

- **At CoA level**, fishing industries operate in economic conditions that promote or try to promote a fair and responsible fisheries. Evidence can be provided by economic reports, studies, research etc.)

and employment option; - address poor living conditions and lack of public services in many coastal communities; - develop research studies on the role of women in the sector; - ensure greater consistency between fisheries and trade policy.

- **At CoA level**, improvement actions that the applicant could implement are, for instance: - encouraging the participation of crew members to trainings as well as their involvement in research projects; - developing market strategies able to increase profits while fostering the potential of coastal communities; relying on blockchain opportunities which could improve the traceability of products since the moment of landing.

Supporting article 3.2

Excess fishing capacity shall be avoided and exploitation of the stocks shall remain economically viable.

Art. 22 of the EU Common Fishery Policy Basic Regulation – Reg. (EU) No 1380/2013

Specific Indicator	What assessors check	Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance
3.2.1 Fishing capacity Based on the data available and the most recent assessments and advice from relevant scientific bodies on stock status and their exploitation rates, estimates indicators to judge about fleet overcapacity.	The Evaluation Group shall ascertain, only at CoE level , whether there is a system to measure total fleet capacity and maintain regularly updated data on all fishing operations, and/or research has been conducted to determine or estimate the fishing capacity commensurate with the sustainable use of the resource. It is also assessed whether a mechanism is in place to reduce this capacity if it is determined to exceed the sustainable level. Assessment can be conducted on the basis of information available from the STECF or national fleet reports.	Making capacity changes can be difficult as it is a moving target with long-term investments dependent on variable annual stock assessments.

Supporting article 3.3

The fishery activity shall work in full compliance with international laws on labor, human rights and safety.

Specific Indicator	What assessors check	Possible measures to address shortcomings in the fishery's performance
3.3.1 Human rights and safety on board International norm shall clearly be followed in fishing fleet under assessment, such as fisheries should not participate in slavery or other human rights abuses and shall promote decent work for all.	The Evaluation Group shall ascertain whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At CoE level, there is evidence that there is a mechanism in place allowing the fishery to be in line with international laws and regulations on the protection of human rights and on 	As regards the CoE , Council Directive (EU) 2017/159, which incorporates into EU Law the ILO Convention No 188 on living and working conditions on board of fishing vessels , has been transposed by Member States. An action that need to be undertaken

**ILO standards [Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182); Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)]
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safety on board. Evidence can be provided by national technical requirements in terms of safety on board and by reports and data on the social dimension of the fisheries sector collected under the National programmes for the collection of data for the fishery sector, in accordance with Regulation (EC) 199/2008, Commission Decision 2016/1251.

- At **CoA level**, the assessors shall document the implementation of rules by the single operators/applicants (evidence include audit procedures, National Authorities reports, administrative documents etc).

now at the Union level, is the development of an accompanying directive including control and enforcement provisions, in order to establish an harmonised inspections system. In addition, since the directive could not apply to self-employed fishermen, Member States should, nonetheless, also ratify the ILO Convention No 188. Another important action/initiative that would improve the legislative framework, is the transposition into Union law of the **IMO International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch-keeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel** (STCW-F).

As regards the CoE, fleet renovation and modernisation plan must to be implemented in order to guarantee on-board safety, better living conditions and the best possible working conditions for crews.

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