



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

MEDITERRANEAN AND BLACK SEA

Brussels
MARE.D.1/JB/

Subject: Reported incidents at sea in the dolphinfish fishery

Dear Mr Agius,

Thank you for your recent letter to Commissioner Sinkevičius on the serious incidents that were recently reported in the Mediterranean in the context of the dolphinfish fishery.

As you are aware, the fight against illegal fishing is one of the Commissioner's priorities, as is the safety of fishermen at sea. In this context I would like to reassure you that the Commission takes the events you referred to very seriously. I also thank you for having communicated with us last year to help raise awareness on this issue.

Firstly, I would like to recall that, as a general matter, the EU supports countries such as Tunisia, through its neighbourhood policy, in fulfilling their international obligations.

As you indicated yourself, these types of incidents are not new. In close cooperation with the Maltese authorities, we have prepared last year GFCM measures, which were eventually adopted and entered into force on 18 April 2020. This is Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/1 on a set of management measures for the use of anchored fish aggregating devices in common dolphinfish fisheries in the Mediterranean Sea. It provides for a framework at international level to address this recurring problem. The adoption of this recommendation is an important development for the management and governance of this fishery. In particular, as you might know, it provides for a prohibition to fish under Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) that have been set up by vessels from another country, as well as the possibility to adopt a code of conduct for this fishery.

We have recently met with the Maltese authorities to discuss how the Commission could further support Malta to address this situation. We are currently exploring with them how to best involve the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) in this matter in support of the control of the GFCM measures, and in particular the prohibition for non-Maltese vessels to fish under Maltese FADs. This would provide added benefits to the patrol means already employed by the Maltese Government. In cooperation with other Member States, notably Italy, we are also considering reinforcing the control of catch certificates for imported dolphinfish, in order to detect possible illegally caught fish on the EU market.

Mr Peter Agius
kuraggpn@gmail.com

Commission européenne/Europese Commissie, 1049 Bruxelles/Brussel, BELGIQUE/BELGIË - Tel. +32 22991111

In the longer term, we are reflecting about all other possible actions we could carry out in the future in accordance with the GFCM recommendation.

As you can see, we can congratulate ourselves for the adoption of the GFCM dolphinfish recommendation, which provides us with new and meaningful leverage to address these incidents. We are now working on using this leverage in the interest of improving governance in the dolphinfish fishery and protect Maltese fishermen and their activities.

Yours sincerely,

Veronika VEITS
Acting Director