

Executive summary:

The Arab region includes five main regional marine bodies of water. Each of these seas or oceans is guided by a regional conservation organization or programme, as well as a regional fisheries management arrangement. Each marine area is tethered to its own set of challenges in relation to the misuse and/or degradation of marine resources; this differentiation stems from a diverse set of realities but ultimately leads to similar ends, in terms of adapting to and mitigating changes.

The Mediterranean Sea is facing a number of challenges, including the impacts of the more than 200 petrochemical, chlorine plants and energy installations and the eutrophication of shallow waters near deltas and major urban areas resulting from the diffuse agricultural and industrial discharges. Mediterranean fisheries are managed through the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). Fish production statistics indicate a relatively stable catch in the Mediterranean in recent years, after a steady increase in production which ceased in the 1980s. A newly identified threat is the increasing invasion of exotic Red Sea species through the Suez Canal, which in some cases seem to be replacing native species, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Region (RESGA) is under direct threat of human activities such as the disposal of domestic and industrial effluent, the non-sustainable use of non-living resources and the expansion of the tourism industry. All though it encompasses productive eco-systems, this region does not as yet have a formal fisheries management arrangement. Regional cooperation on fisheries is limited and no formal regional stock assessment has been conducted.

The Gulf and Oman Sea area is known to be under exponential stress due to the high concentration of fossil fuel related activities; large numbers of offshore installations, tanker loading terminals and exceptionally high oil tanker traffic. In terms of fisheries resources, FAO listed in 2011 some species of concern including kingfish, groupers, and shrimp, and as well a list of 14 priority species were adopted by the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI).

The Atlantic Ocean and the South West Indian Ocean: While there are only four coastal countries to these areas, their resources provide significant benefits for countries in the region, in terms of fisheries resources. For countries such as Mauritania, Morocco, Yemen, Somalia and Comoros, the fisheries sector is important for food security. Fisheries production in Somalia and Comoros seems to have stagnated over the past decades; however no assessments of stocks have been made. Mauritania and Morocco, as member countries of the Commission for Eastern Central Atlantic Fisheries (CECAF), have implemented fisheries management measures in accordance with recommendations of various stock assessments.