

**The anchovy exploitation with the traditional “menaide” small driftnet: a low impacting and highly selective fishery, sustaining the economy of coastal villages in Italy.**

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Small scale driftnets (SSDF) have been historically used throughout the European Union (EU) waters without concern until late 1970s, when large scale driftnets with larger mesh sizes and longer length were introduced, causing significant incidental mortality of protected species. This led to issue specific regulations and to re-evaluating the current regime on SSDF, that culminated in a proposal for a moratorium on driftnets. Two EU studies were undertaken to identify shortcoming in the EU legal framework and fill knowledge gaps on SSDF. In the Mediterranean SSDF were used especially by Italian artisanal fisheries, without environmental concerns. A typical SSDF called “menaide” and targeting anchovy, by means of nets with reduced length (<500 m) and mesh size (20-30 mm) is operating in southern Italy.

In 2013, updated information on fishing capacity and activity, gear characteristics, catch composition, economic and social parameters of the “menaide” fishery was collected by means of interviews, logbooks and embarks, on about sixty small professional vessels (< 12 m length).

A SWOT analysis aimed at evaluating alternative fishing methods to SSDF was implemented using 46 criteria/indicators split in 4 thematic areas.

Results underpinned the “menaide” as a selective fishery, closely linked to the local territories, with low impact on the target stock and the ecosystem and generating more employment at lower costs than other small scale fisheries. The product is highly remunerable, also for the associated processing activity and typified by a popular brand. These aspects provide robust evidences to implement specific management measures.

**Keywords:** small scale fisheries, Mediterranean Sea, anchovy, driftnets, SWOT analysis, fishery management.

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