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Mediterranean fisheries: stocks recovery means fishers' recovery

- Press Release

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In stark contrast to the North-East Atlantic, where more and more stocks are being fished sustainably, the Mediterranean Sea still laments declining fisheries despite the conservation efforts of both regulators and fishermen. The European Commission, committed to its agenda on jobs and growth, is concerned with what this could mean for the thousands of fishermen active in the Med.

This is why European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella is launching a new **Mediterranean strategy** and a call for action at international level at Europe's biggest industry event in the sector: the Seafood Expo Global. On 27 April he will hold a public debate with some key players in EU fisheries. He will then have a Ministerial conference with ministers from both the EU and the Mediterranean partner countries.

"The facts are undisputed - he said at a recent conference - : fish stocks in the Mediterranean are shrinking. Some are on the verge of depletion. All in all, 93% of the fish stocks assessed are over-exploited. This is an environmental but also a social issue, as it represents a clear threat to the way of life of fishing communities around the Mediterranean".

There are several reasons for this bad state, including pollution and climate change. But there can be no doubt that extensive overfishing is one of the key causes. It is equally true that we can't really say how all stocks are faring, because for many we only have very partial data. But even the gaps in knowledge cannot be used as an excuse to delay action. *"If we don't take action now - warns Mr Vella - there is a serious risk that stocks will decline beyond the point of no return and fishermen will have nothing left to fish. Reversing the trend and keeping the livelihood of many coastal communities will require an exceptional effort - but it is possible."*

The EU is willing to take the lead in seeking out solutions for this state of affairs, taking on board our Southern and Eastern Mediterranean neighbours. Commissioner Vella has already been in contact with some of the EU's key partners, including Algeria, Turkey and Tunisia, and there is a shared sense that action is needed across all stocks. Only a comprehensive approach and a sense of engagement from all actors and countries around the basin can produce concrete results. At a special Ministerial conference the Commissioner intends to start working on a new Declaration on sustainable fisheries in the Mediterranean that would be a follow-up to the 2003 Venice Declaration and that, this time next year, should give new vision and impetus to conservation and sustainability in the Med.

In line with this new thrust, this year's [EU presence](#) [1] at the seafood exhibition will focus strongly on the Med. The Commission will showcase some of the most iconic Mediterranean species, and, as usual, Commission experts will be available at the stand for bilateral meetings and information queries. The visual identity of the campaign will also be launched at the expo together with its name, [#MedFish4ever](#) [2]. It is inspired by the fish-featuring mosaics from ancient times and is meant as a reminder of how deeply fish and fishing are rooted in our culture.

More information

[MedFish4ever](#) [2]

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Links

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/seafood-expo-global_en

[2] <https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/inseparable/en/medfish4ever>