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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Šefčovič
on behalf of the European Commission
(20.9.2024)

The management plan for the sustainable exploitation of common dolphinfish, adopted by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) in 2023[1] and incorporated into EU law through Regulation EU 2024/259 establishing the fishing opportunities for 2024 for the Mediterranean Sea[2], covers only the fisheries targeting this species which uses Fish Aggregating Devices (FAD). However, there can be bycatches of this species in other fisheries, which can be marketed.

To ensure the control of the common dolphinfish fishery, the GFCM adopted a permanent international inspection scheme[3] in 2023. In 2024, the European Fisheries Control Agency coordinated the deployment of one of its patrol vessels in the Strait of Sicily, for a joint inspection campaign with the relevant contracting parties. The campaign, carried out by the EU-GFCM fisheries inspectors in the South of Sicily, ended on 3 September 2024. So far, no suspected infringements for fishing dolphinfish with FADs during the closure period were detected.

Ensuring a level playing field is one of the main objectives the Commission pursues at the level of the GFCM, where it initiated the above-mentioned management and control measures, in close cooperation with the Member States.

Finally, as determined by the EU Fisheries Control Regulation[4], the responsibility for the operational implementation of applicable control measures and the enforcement in case of violation of the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy lies with the Member States.

[1] Recommendation GFCM/46/2023/14 establishing a multiannual management plan for the sustainable exploitation of common dolphinfish in the Mediterranean Sea, repealing Recommendations GFCM/30/2006/2, GFCM/43/2019/1 and GFCM/44/2021/11.
[2] Council Regulation (EU) 2024/259 of 10 January 2024 fixing for 2024 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Mediterranean and Black Seas http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/259/oj
[3] Recommendation GFCM/46/2023/17 on an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme for common dolphinfish fisheries outside waters under national jurisdiction in the Mediterranean Sea.
[4] Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Union control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy, as amended by Regulation (EU) 2023/2842.