

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-000258/25
to the Commission
Peter Agius (PPE)
(22 January 2025)**

Subject: Scarce catches of lampuki (*coryphaena hippurus*) by Maltese and Gozitan fishers

Maltese catches of lampuki (*coryphaena hippurus*, or the common dolphinfish) have reached historic lows. Preliminary data from Malta suggests that 2024 catches stand at just 160 tonnes, approximately half of last year's figures.

Regulation (EU) 2023/2124 ⁽¹⁾ establishes a closed season for the fishing of lampuki from 1 January until 14 August each year. However, field reports reveal that while Maltese fishers have adhered to this regulation, other fishers in the Mediterranean — particularly from Tunisia and Sicily — were reportedly deploying fish aggregating devices (FADs) as early as July.

Accounts from Maltese fishers suggest that these early deployments influence lampuki migration patterns, disadvantaging those adhering to Regulation (EU) 2023/2124. This raises concerns about compliance and the impact on fisheries that respect the closed season.

Lampuki is a vital seasonal fish for Maltese households, traditionally offering a low-cost option that supports the local economy.

Given this:

1. What measures are being taken to monitor compliance with Regulation (EU) 2023/2124 concerning lampuki?
2. Is the Commission considering issuing a clarification of paragraph 23 of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Recommendation GFCM/46/2023/14 ⁽²⁾ and Article 82 of Regulation (EU) 2023/2124, which set out rules for lampuki?
3. What additional measures may be introduced to ensure a level playing field between EU and non-EU fishers in the Mediterranean, while supporting conservation efforts by compliant fisheries?

Submitted: 22.1.2025

**Answer given by Mr Kadis on behalf of the European Commission
(26 February 2025)**

1. The international joint inspection scheme for the dolphinfish fishery with Fish Aggregating Devices (FAD) is now in force under Recommendation GFCM/46/2023/17 ⁽¹⁾. The European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) patrol vessel is deployed in the Strait of Sicily before the start of the fishing season of the FAD dolphinfish fishery to deter such cases of non-compliance. While the Commission received reports of unmarked FADs sighted at sea during this period, it has not received sightings of fishing vessels targeting dolphinfish with FADs outside the authorised period from EFCA or from national control authorities. Should the Commission receive such reports from the Maltese authorities, it would ensure thorough assessment.

2. The Commission considers that the current drafting of paragraph 23 of Recommendation GFCM/46/2023/14 ⁽²⁾ and Article 82 of Regulation (EU) 2023/2124 ⁽³⁾ is sufficiently clear in prohibiting common dolphinfish fisheries using FADs from 1 January to 14 August 2024.

3. The fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is a key priority of the Commission. In this context, the Commission started last year an ambitious process for strengthening the Compliance Committee (CoC) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). This year, the Commission will be pilot testing the compliance tables with all Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) aiming to assess the proper implementation of the management measures by all CPCs. In addition, the Commission shares the view that cases of non-compliance detected at sea should be followed up in the CoC. In May 2025, the GFCM intends to organise a dedicated seminar on inspection schemes in Vigo.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2023/2124 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 October 2023 on certain provisions for fishing in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Agreement area, OJ L, 2023/2124, 12.10.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2124/oj>.

⁽²⁾ Recommendation GFCM/46/2023/14 establishing a multiannual management plan for the sustainable exploitation of common dolphinfish in the Mediterranean Sea, <https://gfcml.sharepoint.com/CoC/Decisions%20Texts/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2FCoC%2FDecisions%20Texts%2FREC%2ECM%5FGFCM%5F46%5F2023%5F14%2De%2Epdf&parent=%2FCoC%2FDecisions%20Texts&p=true&ga=1>.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.fao.org/gfcm/decisions/en/>

⁽²⁾ <https://www.fao.org/gfcm/decisions/en/>

⁽³⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32023R2124>