

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-004136/25
to the Commission
Peter Agius (PPE)
(21 October 2025)**

Subject: Illegal fishing of dolphinfish by Tunisian vessels using Maltese floating aggregate devices

Maltese fishers are reporting repeated incursions by Tunisian vessels that are illegally fishing using Maltese floating aggregate devices (FADs) for dolphinfish in the Mediterranean sea to the north and north-west of Malta. The evidence submitted by these fishers via email includes photographs identifying vessel names and registration numbers, as well as GPS logs. Three Tunisian-flagged vessels have been specifically identified.

The *Ocean Sentinel*, chartered by the European Fisheries Control Agency, has had a deterrent effect in areas it patrols. However, fishers confirm that poachers adapt their incursions to avoid being detected. One vessel alone cannot provide sufficient protection over the entire fishing area.

The dolphinfish fishery is of particular cultural and economic importance to Malta. The number of catches has declined sharply in recent years, with a 50% decline last year, driving prices up to EUR 15/ kg.

In this context:

1. How will the Commission act against illegal fishing by Tunisian vessels on Maltese FADs, including bilaterally and through the Compliance Committee of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean?
2. Can the Commission strengthen enforcement by the European Fisheries Control Agency, including carrying out joint patrols with Maltese, Italian and Tunisian authorities?

Submitted: 21.10.2025

**Answer given by Mr Kadis on behalf of the European Commission
(13 November 2025)**

The Commission understands the socioeconomic importance of the Lampuki fisheries in Malta and is determined to ensure a level-playing field in the region. The EU participation to the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean international joint inspection scheme (IJIS) is delivering important results in identifying and deterring potential infringements at sea. In 2025, three suspected infringements from Tunisian flagged fishing vessels were detected in the Fishing Aggregating Device (FAD) common dolphinfish fishery, including one case of a vessel catching fish attracted by a FAD set by another Contracting Party vessel. The Commission sent a letter to Tunisia to follow-up on these cases, their reply is under analysis.

The IJIS allow for the collaboration of EU and non-EU inspectors. The Commission notes that the Maltese administration was formally invited to deploy their patrol means in 2026 in international waters to join the efforts alongside the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA). This will allow for a more complete coverage, increasing the likelihood of stopping potential poachers on Maltese FADs.

Moreover, the Pact for the Mediterranean ⁽¹⁾, adopted by the Commission on 16 October 2025, highlights the EU's intention to work with non-EU countries to promote and implement international governance standards and develop a project to increase control and inspection capabilities of coastal States to fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

⁽¹⁾ The Pact for the Mediterranean One Sea, One Pact, One Future, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, https://north-africa-middle-east-gulf.ec.europa.eu/joint-communication-pact-mediterranean_en.