

WEBINAR 20

19th June 2019 | 04.00 p.m. – 06.00 p.m.

SUBJECT MATTER	Presence of dolphins and reduction of fishing: solutions for a possible balance in the marine ecosystem
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COORDINATORS	Paolo Fiume	CIHEAM Bari
	Antonio Errico	Magna Grecia Mare Association

INTERPRETER	Philippe Debs	CIHEAM Bari
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COASTAL COMMUNITIES			LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE	STUDENTS/YOUNG PEOPLE PRESENT
	ALBANIA	Porto Palermo	Endora Celohoxhaj	
	ALGERIA	Algeri	Rafik Mecellah	
	EGYPT	Marsa Matrouh	Ashraf El Sadek	
	ITALY	Tricase	Antonio Errico Salvatore Baglivo	7
	LEBANON	Tyre	Ali Dbouk	4
	MOROCCO	Nador	Najib El Ouamari	8
	TUNISIA	Zarzis	Sami Dabbouni	3

PRODUCED MATERIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integral recording of Webinar via platform Zoom; • Summary report.
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SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

The eternal war between fishermen and dolphins was the theme addressed during the online meeting on Webport's virtual docks. The Webinar aimed to analyze the relationship between the increasingly massive presence of dolphins in the Mediterranean sea and the reduction in catches and fish stocks, recorded in the small coastal fishing sector.

The discussion was conducted and coordinated, as well as by Paolo Fiume and Antonio Errico also by Najib El Ouamari, referent of the Moroccan community.

The theme was presented and introduced by Antonio Errico, who at the beginning of his speech reported the increasingly frequent reporting, both by fishermen and by yachtsmen, of dolphin sightings (but also of swordfish) in the Mediterranean.

This presence, which could be an indication of an increase in fish stocks in the Mediterranean, is seen in a different and even contrasting way by the two categories of users. The encounter with dolphins, in fact, is seen as a great fortune by yachtsmen but unfortunately not by fishermen, who consider this presence a real problem for their professional activity.

Today's online meeting aimed to put together these two opposing visions and then broaden the debate to try to find a possible balance solution that takes into account both the well-being of the marine ecosystem and the needs of fishermen.

Najib El Ouamari, presented the situation in Morocco, in his own community. The problem began to be present in Morocco around the 90s, with the increasingly massive presence of dolphins of the species *Tursiops truncatus*, called in Arabic "big dolphin". The presence of dolphins negatively affects the fishing of small-sized species that are on the surface and, in particular, on sardine fishing. Dolphin attacks on sardine fishermen's nets create not only damage to the equipment but also the consequent decrease in the amount of fish caught. The problem obviously does not only concern Morocco but also involves Algeria, Greece, Tunisia, Spain and many other Mediterranean countries.

The National Fisheries Research Institute in Nador has, for several years, started a series of analyzes and experiments to find a possible solution.

In 2000, along with Tunisia, some experiments were started involving the use of ultrasound to ward off dolphins, but without any appreciable results. These systems aim to distract the radar system used by dolphins to search for food.

In the following years further experiments followed through the use of the same systems with higher frequencies but even these tests proved ineffective, because after a first period of real effectiveness the dolphins became accustomed to such systems.

The community of Tricase Porto, in Italy, reported that in the area, the problem of dolphins, is a problem that has existed for a long time, as evidenced by interviews with fishermen, historical documentation and experts. In the past, fishermen had found a form of peaceful coexistence with dolphins. Experience has led fishermen to live together in the past, putting their intelligence in comparison with that of dolphins. During their fishing trips, the fishermen, after having lowered the nets, used to watch over them until the moment to uplift them. In this way, the nets remained in the water only for the time necessary for the capture, which, as is known, takes place shortly after the nets have been placed in the water. In this way, the fishermen were able to control and avoid dolphin attacks.

The prevalence of dolphin attacks on sardine fishing may be mainly due to the fishing technique most used for this species. The sardines are in fact caught very often with the purse seine and with the use of a light source to gather the fish near the net. The light and the frenzy of the sardines also, obviously, attracts the dolphins.

In Morocco the loss of catches due to dolphin attacks is very important and can even reach 80-90% of catches. Although fishermen have tried to change fishing techniques and use technology as a deterrent system, there has been no satisfactory result. Furthermore, fishermen cannot count on the experience of the elderly as the problem is not very old but dates back only to the 90s.

The Moroccan community is testing the use of new nets made of more resistant materials, able to withstand the attacks of this species and at the moment such experiments are giving encouraging results.

In Tunisia, the problem of dolphins was born around the 80's and was seen and addressed in different ways. The use of firecrackers and the immersion, near the net, of a sponge soaked in diesel oil, are two stratagems used by fishermen to try to keep the dolphins away. However, both mechanisms have proved useless. The use of a rifle to shoot a specimen and make others move away from the sight of blood is unfortunately the technique that has proved to be most effective, but it is illegal.

The point of view reported by sponge fishermen from the same Tunisian community was different. For this category of fishermen, forced to dive and reach the bottom of the sea in order to collect sponges, dolphins are valuable companions and give security to the fisherman.

In Lebanon, too, the dolphin is considered a friend of the fishermen. In Tiro, dolphins are only passing through and do not cause major problems for the small-scale fishing sector. The Lebanese fishermen reported during the meeting that the biggest problem for them is sharks.

Rocco Cazzato, a fisherman from the community of Tricase, intervened explaining that 60 years ago the fishing nets were lowered at sunset and withdrawn after an hour just to avoid leaving time for dolphins to attack the fish contained in the net. Today the fisherman goes out at sunset to lower the fishing net and then withdraws it the next morning. The fishing nets remain in the water for a long time at the mercy of the dolphin attacks. Moreover, on the basis of his experience, the use of fishing nets with larger meshes avoids the capture of small species of great interest to dolphins.

In reality, as reported by the Moroccan community, during the sardine fishing trip, once the fish has been identified, it is surrounded by the fishing net which is then immediately lifted and then remains in the water for a very short time.

The problem of dolphins is obviously closely linked to the struggle for survival and arises when fishing conflicts with the food source of the dolphins. Excessive human intake of fish reduces the amount available to dolphins who are forced to attack the resources contained in the fishing nets. Diversification of fishing activities, and specifically the creation of fishing tourism activities can certainly be a stratagem that allows the fisherman to have a good income from their activity and begin to see dolphins as a resource rather than a problem. Many people are fascinated by dolphins and the idea of meeting them at sea on a boat trip.

The different approaches and points of view on dolphins have shown, at the end of the debate, that there is no technique that allows the removal of dolphins. The eternal war between man and dolphins could be solved only through a strategy and not through the use of technologies.

