



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/B2/BM

Dear Mr Marzoa Notlevsen,

I would like to thank you for your letter dated 22 October 2025 presenting MEDAC's Advice on the use of the trap-line in the Mediterranean swordfish fishery.

During the year 2024, multiple reports from the scientific and control side came to the attention of my services on the use of traplines. The reports raised concerns on the widespread unregulated use of this new gear which could have significant impact on increased CPUEs, in particular for sensitive stocks such as Mediterranean swordfish.

While it has been suggested that traplines could help reduce bycatches, result in lower operational costs, and potentially improve profitability with a lower environmental footprint, the information currently available to the European Commission, Member States, and ICCAT remains insufficient to fully assess their impact or to adapt the ICCAT regulatory framework accordingly. Traplines are currently lacking any regulatory framework, data regarding their use are very limited, and their impact both on target and non-target species is still to be assessed.

Against this background, the position expressed by the MEDAC in its paper meets the Commission's objective to provide a regulatory framework to address the present situation. Our proposal is not to restrict the current use of this gear, but to ensure that every fisher using it, as well as observers, correctly report the information necessary for making a proper assessment. As such, we welcome the view that standardised data collection, observer coverage, and collaboration with the ICCAT SCRS are essential to build a robust knowledge base and conduct a comparative analysis of the impact of traplines in comparison to traditional longline. These elements will be crucial for the scientific evaluation of traplines and their possible future integration into the ICCAT management framework.

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From the point of view of control and compliance, although the majority of Member States have indicated their opinion that this fishing gear cannot be used until it is regulated there is no consensus on this, much less if we consider the position of all ICCAT contracting parties. Therefore, establishing a legal framework under which this activity can be carried out, even if it is on an interim basis, contributes to the principle of legal certainty and to achieving a level playing field. This is especially important within the framework of the joint international inspection scheme for swordfish.

The European Commission intends, ahead of the upcoming ICCAT Annual Meeting, to propose a Recommendation that reflects these objectives and requires CPCs whose vessels use traplines to adhere to these principles and comply with the same standards.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

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