

An integrated methodology for the monitoring of Italian recreational fishing within the Marine Strategy Framework Directive

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Recreational fishing is a widespread activity that represents a form of leisure and entertainment during free time, with deep social roots and millions of enthusiast fishers. This practice has considerable economic and socio-cultural importance, even though it can generate impacts on fish stocks and competition with professional fisheries. Recently, a monitoring program aimed to investigate the catch and effort of Italian recreational fishing as well as its impacts on marine resources was implemented in the context of the Marine

Strategy Framework Directive. A telephone survey, based on a random approach, was performed to establish a panel of fishers to estimate the Italian recreational fishing population and determine the statistical universe over which to expand field observations and assessments.

In 2020, 11.095 telephone interviews were carried out in Italy (70% coastal, 30% non-coastal municipalities) for a total of 1.025 collected recreational fishers.

On-site surveys from 4 pilot areas (Tuscany, Sicily, Marche, Veneto) were also carried out interviewing a total of 1028 fishermen during their recreational activity in 2020. A total of 609 fishermen (from telephone or on-site surveys) were also available to be re-contacted, every month, for recall interviews. Collected data included fishers' age, fishing techniques, fishing tackle, fishing spots, avidity (fishing days/year), target species, baits, catch composition and biomass, fish size, catch and release ratio, effort and costs, categorizing information for fishing type (boat, land, spear).

This approach has been then extended to the entire Italian seas since 2021 and the study is still ongoing.