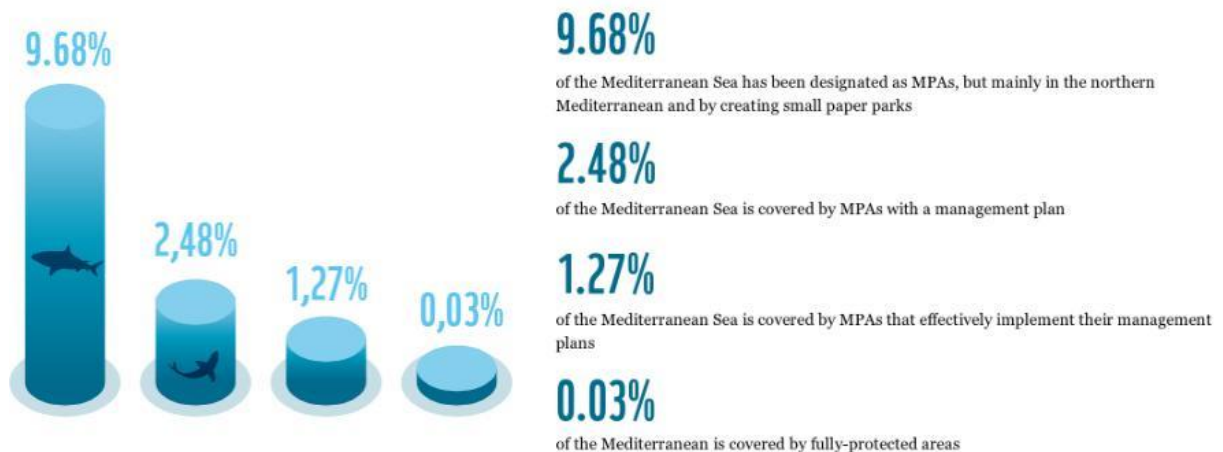




Protecting 30% of the Mediterranean Sea will boost fish stocks and biodiversity - WWF report

Protecting 30% of the Mediterranean Sea could give a massive boost to declining fish species and marine biodiversity, research reveals. Today, only 9.68% of the Mediterranean Sea has been designated for protection, with only 1.27% effectively protected. Last year the EU pledged to protect 30% of land and sea areas by 2030.

Fish stocks will continue to decline if unsustainable fishing and other industrial activities continue, the analysis - developed by scientists for WWF - shows. However, effective protection covering 30% of the Mediterranean Sea in specific areas and sustainably managed activities in the rest of the basin would see these same commercial fish stocks increase, while supporting the recovery of the wider marine ecosystem .



In the Western Mediterranean, for example, the analysis shows the biomass of predator species like sharks could increase by up to 45%, that of commercial species like groupers by 50% and that of European hake could double. Even the bluefin tuna, the most iconic and commercially valuable population of the Mediterranean, would potentially recover its biomass to a record-high increase of up to 140%.



Odran Corcoran, Marine Policy Officer at the WWF European Policy Office said, “by protecting key areas of our seas and coasts, we can trigger a domino effect of positive results. Rolling out this protection across the EU is vital to realising the objectives of not only the European Green Deal, but of the Biodiversity and Farm To Fork Strategies. The recovery and protection of the biodiversity that hundreds of millions of Europeans depend on cannot be delayed.”



OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS

80%

OF FISH STOCKS HAVE BECOME
OVERFISHED, MARINE MAMMALS
HAVE DECREASED BY 41% AND
POSIDONIA BY 34%

In 2020, the EU launched a Biodiversity Strategy, which states that at least 30% of EU seas must be legally protected and properly managed and monitored by 2030. For WWF, this commitment is laudable. However, it must be matched with concrete actions to reverse negative trends in the Mediterranean such as declining fish stocks due to unsustainable fishing. It is also crucial to tackle the impacts of climate change, which put the livelihoods of millions who depend on the sea basin’s health at risk.

In late 2021, world leaders are expected to adopt a new Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to halt and reverse the loss of nature and more than 50 countries are already calling for a commitment to protect 30% of the planet by 2030.

The study, which will be available here from 25 February, was conducted by WWF in collaboration with scientists from the French CNRS-CRIOBE, the Ecopath International Initiative, and the Spanish ICM–CSIC.

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