People often use the word ‘iconic’ to describe the Mediterranean, reflecting its history, culture and unique environmental features. This is a region with a rich heritage of interaction between people and nature—but we’ve lost this delicate balance, and we must spare no effort in bringing it back.

The Mediterranean Sea is critical to the life and economy of the 150 million people who live around its shores. An assessment of the current situation reveals that this globally critical sea is suffering serious decline—overfishing, pollution, coastal overdevelopment and critical habitat loss are all making it more difficult for the Mediterranean to support its various communities and economies.

The Mediterranean Marine Initiative is WWF’s plan for confronting and reversing this decline. Building on the considerable experience, expertise and relationships we’ve developed over decades of marine work, WWF will bring together a network of partners to secure the sustainability of the Mediterranean. We’ll be joining up with fishing communities, tourism operators, public officials and their agencies, other NGOs and scientists and researchers, as well as the broader public.

We can still fix much of the damage that has been done to the oceans and ocean economy and hand on their riches to future generations. Whether we do this because we care about the planet or simply because it makes economic sense, it doesn’t matter: we just need to act.

John Tanzer, Leader, WWF Oceans Practice

Demetres Karavellas, Chair, WWF Mediterranean Marine Initiative

The Mediterranean touches 46,000km of the coastline of Europe, Africa and the Middle East. A complex region of breathtaking natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage, it encompasses 21 countries and territories.

It’s also one of the most populated regions on the globe, a melting pot of cultures, languages and people. Within this treasure trove is a wealth of biodiversity, and some of the most fertile land on the planet – all blessed with a mild and temperate climate.

The only place in the world where three continents meet...
A “BLUE GOLD RUSH” IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

OIL & GAS INDUSTRY
OVER 20% of the Mediterranean basin currently covered by oil and gas exploration contracts. Offshore gas production to increase five-fold by 2030 (mainly eastern Mediterranean Sea - from 2010 to 2030)

MARINE MINING
very likely RAPID DEVELOPMENT (all Mediterranean Sea)

AQUACULTURE
+ 112% production by 2030 (Mediterranean EU countries)

COASTAL DEVELOPMENT
+ 5,000 km of artificialised coastline by 2025 (compared to 2015)

TOURISM
+ 500 million international arrivals by 2030 (all Mediterranean Sea)

4% per annum growth rate in global trade (all Mediterranean Sea by 2052)

LAND-BASED POLLUTION SOURCES
UPWARD TREND in heavy metal pollution (all Mediterranean Sea)

RECREATIONAL FISHING
potentially FAST DEVELOPMENT (all Mediterranean Sea)

ANTHOZOANS UNDER THREAT
Over 50% of Mediterranean reef corals are under threat from degradation and disease.

MARINE MAMMALS AND FISH IN DECLINE
- 34% of the total marine mammal populations (mainly eastern Mediterranean Sea - from 2010 to 2030) have been lost in the past three and a half decades.

THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

OVER 20% of the global Gross Marine Product (GMP) is the ocean’s direct services enabled by the ocean. 

STATE OF MARINE ASSETS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Decades of damaging, and often unregulated, economic activity in the Mediterranean Sea have taken a toll—and the region’s ecological health is in decline.

SOURCES

The green turtle population in the Mediterranean is more than 53% of Mediterranean Sea generate much more value than we are aware of and could provide even more if well managed.


Infographics provided by:
Bianco Tangerine snc
The Mediterranean Marine Initiative (MMI) is a transformative ecoregional programme built on the coordinated effort of WWF’s offices in the region. It strengthens WWF’s capacity to advance marine conservation in the Mediterranean by building new alliances and creating new solutions to the challenges we face.

The MMI is based on a strong network of local, national, regional and international partnerships. Its goal is to catalyse transformative change at all levels, working with civil society organizations, governments and public and private donors to bring innovative new approaches to resource management and biodiversity protection. These partnerships will ensure that the Mediterranean conservation community has the political and financial support it needs to deliver a sustainable future for this unique region.
SAVING THE BLUEFIN TUNA
WWF has been at the heart of the fight that has brought back the bluefin tuna from the brink of extinction. Bluefin tuna has been fished in the Mediterranean Sea since ancient times. However, in recent decades global demand changed—Japan’s appetite for sushi and sashimi skyrocketed, and bluefin tuna became one of the most highly prized fish on the market. This led to unsustainable fishing pressure, and Mediterranean stocks plummeted by 85% in a few short years. Thanks to WWF’s campaigning and advocacy work, in 2006 the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) adopted a science-based recovery plan with rigorous control measures. Today the population has made an exceptional recovery with an overall biomass increase of almost 400%. A sustainable future for the Mediterranean bluefin tuna fishery now looks possible—which is great news for an industry which generates an annual US$870 million in total landings, employs around 5,000 people and supports more than 660 fishing boats and 26 tuna traps.

FROM BLUE GROWTH TO A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY
The Mediterranean Sea is in the middle of a ‘Blue Gold Rush’ that could seriously undermine the health of its marine ecosystems. WWF has fostered innovative work to identify the current and projected growth of the maritime industry, and made recommendations to combat the potential consequences. Growth is unprecedented: the aquaculture sector, for example, is expected to expand by 112% by 2030; while offshore oil and gas exploration contracts currently cover more than 20% of the Mediterranean Sea and could increase by a further 20% in the same period. But healthy marine ecosystems also have great economic value to the region: WWF and partners broke new ground by demonstrating that they generate a staggering annual economic value of US$645 billion. To maintain the revenues, employment and social development that are key for human wellbeing around the Mediterranean, we must urgently shift to a sustainable blue economy.

PROTECTING KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS
Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) are an effective way of protecting areas of important biodiversity by regulating local maritime activities such as tourism, diving and fisheries. WWF has worked with many partners to advance the establishment and management of MPAs in the Mediterranean. We get results, too: we played a key role in increasing the Spanish national MPA network from 0.5 to 8%, and contributed to setting up the Pelagos Sanctuary, aimed at the protection of marine mammals. WWF has pioneered capacity building for MPA managers, which has created a real shift towards effective management. We’re also a founding member of—and active participant in—MedPAN, the regional MPA network. Today around 7% of the Mediterranean has protected status.

AWARD-WINNING SOLUTIONS FOR SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES
Fishing communities must have the opportunity to shape their destiny and help manage the resources on which they depend. With this in mind, WWF has been working with small-scale fishers across the region to improve practices and make their livelihoods more secure. We established the first fisheries co-management scheme in Spain for the sandeel, which received the WWF Award for Conservation Merit in 2013. Today we work in 10 countries with 21 pilot projects, coming together with fishers to demonstrate the sustainability potential of small-scale fisheries and to create a win-win approach that protects fishers’ wellbeing as well as the health of marine ecosystems. We’ve also forged key partnerships (e.g. with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean) to formally adopt a co-management approach in fisheries regulations, and have played a key role in creating the first regional artisanal fishers network.

CHANGING THE PARADIGM OF SEAFOOD PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION
Seafood is central to the Mediterranean’s unique economic, social and cultural identity. European Mediterranean countries consume almost 7.5 million tonnes of fish each year, yet only around 2.5 million tonnes come from domestic sources. WWF has raised the alarm on overfishing and the urgent need to offer consumers more opportunities to choose sustainable seafood. Through campaigning and events around the region we’ve spread the message about sustainable seafood to more than 30 million people, and we’ve already measured a positive change in behaviour. We remain closely engaged with key players in the international seafood market who have committed to fight illegal and damaging fisheries and achieve 100% sustainability for their seafood portfolios.

© Claudia Amico / © WWF
© Kornati MPA
© Claudia Amico / © WWF
© Brian J. Skerry / National Geographic Stock / WWF
© Claudia Amico / © WWF
SHARED GLOBAL GOALS

WWF’s aim is to reinforce the growing political will to drive and shape a sustainable development policy for the world’s oceans. As a credible convener of multi-stakeholder actions, we’re experts at forming partnerships between civil society, government and the private sector – and this will be crucial for the Mediterranean in the years to come.

Willingness to address the problems faced by our marine ecosystems is gathering political momentum, and it’s now reaching the highest levels of decision-making. An increasingly important group with strong leaders acting together for the ocean is underpinned by a growing public awareness and an expectation that actions will be taken.

WWF GLOBAL PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

WWF’s work around the world’s oceans closely reflects international development priorities. There are strong synergies between our own global goals and the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

**WWF’s 2030 goal and outcomes for oceans around the world are:**

**Goal:** Productive and resilient ocean ecosystems, sustaining human wellbeing and conserving biodiversity.

**Outcome 1:** By 2030, conserve and effectively manage at least 30% of coastal and marine ecosystems by significantly reducing impacts, improving resilience and restoring health and productivity.

**Outcome 2:** By 2030, double the world’s sustainably managed fisheries.
Our vision
By 2030, the Mediterranean has healthy marine and coastal ecosystems of ‘Good Environmental Status’ that produce streams of benefits, maintain vibrant economies and which are recognized by the region’s communities as highly valuable for human wellbeing.

Our conservation goals by 2030

- 50 million people care for ocean health and act to reduce their footprint
- A sustainable blue economy model drives development and investment in the maritime industry
- At least 30% of coastal and marine ecosystems are effectively managed and the number of sustainable fisheries has doubled

Our plans of action 2018-2022

- Improve ocean governance
- Transform Mediterranean fisheries
- Sustainable seafood production & consumption
- Protect our wildlife
**1. IMPROVE OCEAN GOVERNANCE**

**THEORY OF CHANGE**

WWF will work with regional partners to advocate for better planning and implementation of maritime policies, for a sustainable blue economy, and for improved management of marine resources. Our strategies include policy and advocacy work, stakeholder engagement and capacity building, and raising awareness of priority issues in ocean governance in the Mediterranean Sea. Crosscutting projects will address key areas for intervention including the blue economy, integrated planning in the marine environment, sustainable financing, and the conservation and management of marine resources. Best practices will be replicated and exchange of information between regional actors will be promoted.

**STRATEGIES**

- **POLICY & ADVOCACY**
  - Key regional marine governance institutions and businesses endorse WWF’s sustainable blue economy principles and put them into practice.
- **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & CAPACITY BUILDING**
  - Major green and blue public and private financing institutions adopt and implement criteria for investments which reflect ecosystem-based management principles.
- **KNOWLEDGE**
  - Regional governance institutions have endorsed WWF’s key recommendations on ecosystem-based marine policies and transboundary cooperation.
- **AWARENESS**
  - Decision makers and the wider public are increasingly aware of the conservation importance of the Mediterranean network of EBSAs/MPAs.
- **DEMONSTRATION**
  - A moratorium on all new oil and gas exploration and extraction activities is established within the EBSA of the north-western Mediterranean and the Ionian Sea.
  - 15% of the Mediterranean is covered by effectively managed MPAs with at least 2% being no-take zones.

**EXPECTED KEY RESULTS**

WE AIM TO

- Direct regional investment flows towards sustainable blue economy activities, and increase upfront investment to improve Mediterranean marine conservation and recovery.
- Ensure the sustainable management of the whole Mediterranean Sea through better implementation of integrated, transboundary and ecosystem-based marine policies.
- Ensure the protection of key Mediterranean ecosystems through the establishment of a well managed and ecologically coherent network of MPAs.

**2. TRANSFORM MEDITERRANEAN FISHERIES**

**THEORY OF CHANGE**

Mediterranean fish stocks remain in crisis. Developing a culture of responsibility, accountability and compliance among fishery stakeholders is an essential step towards making fisheries sustainable. Through the WWF Mediterranean Marine Initiative we’ll use the influence we’ve gained from field projects and our engagement with communities and other actors (including businesses and policymakers) to create the political will needed to conserve fish stocks and foster sustainable livelihoods. We’ll mobilize civil society towards the same end. This work will shift public opinion, empower communities, redirect finance, improve governance and orient markets towards biodiversity conservation and sustainability in both fisheries and consumption. The result will be thriving fish populations and healthy ecosystems, contributing to a vital economy that improves the livelihoods of coastal communities.

**STRATEGIES**

- **POLICY & ADVOCACY**
  - Long-term management plans and effective monitoring and control systems are in place, delivering tangible results towards the recovery of Mediterranean fish stocks.
  - The impact of fisheries on sharks and rays is reduced by 50% and progress made towards responsible fishing.
- **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**
  - National and regional regulatory mechanisms to avoid IUU fishing (e.g. PSM, EC IUU regulation, GFCM recommendations) are effectively implemented.
- **DEMONSTRATION & REPLIATION**
  - There is scaled-up investment in small-scale fishery sustainability that will lead to ecosystem-based management of marine resources, healthy fish stocks and the improvement of coastal livelihoods.
  - Innovative solutions are developed to minimize the impacts of fishing gear and bycatch, promoting a new generation of fishing methods.

**EXPECTED KEY RESULTS**

- Ensure that 80% of assessed Mediterranean fish stocks (including bluefin tuna and swordfish) are fully recovered or on the way to recovery. |
- Induce a transformational change in the Mediterranean fisheries sector and promote financial investment that generates equitable returns for fishers and investors.
- Build the resilience of the most vulnerable small-scale fishing communities by strengthening cooperation between fishers and stakeholders, scaling up co-management pilot projects, and improving access to markets.

---

1. Includes multiannual plans, selectivity/landing obligations, spatial time closures.
2. Based on 2017 GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee.
3. To get 100% of the stock recovered by 2025.
3. SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

THEORY OF CHANGE

The seafood industry and people’s consumption habits contribute to the issues of overfishing and unsustainable fishing practices that are putting pressure on marine ecosystems. Importantly, they can play a major role in addressing the sustainability level of fishing activities.

WWF’s work will contribute to accelerating the transition of the seafood offer and demand in Mediterranean countries towards sustainability, redirecting seafood industry investments and improving the traceability and transparency of seafood products. WWF will use its influence, skills and experience in engaging policy makers, businesses and consumers to achieve sustainable seafood production, legal and traceable trade and responsible consumption to support marine conservation and sustainable livelihoods in the Mediterranean.

We will engage with corporate partners towards improving their seafood portfolios, with particular attention on products coming from the Mediterranean Sea. At the same time, we will inform and guide consumers in making sustainable seafood choices.

STRATEGIES

POLICY & ADVOCACY

- An EU-wide digital traceability system is established and mandatory for EU member states and has clear requirements for its use and implementation.
- Seafood labelling requirements are consistently implemented in all EU member states and are harmonized for all fisheries and aquaculture products, so that consumers can make informed purchasing choices.

MARKETS

- At least 5 major companies at national or regional level redirect their seafood sourcing and production practices and policies towards sustainability.
- Standards for responsible aquaculture of seabass and seabream are available and adopted by at least 3 aquaculture producers in the Mediterranean Sea.
- Market loopholes are eliminated from the traceability process of seafood products, at least for the Atlantic bluefin tuna.
- Sustainably sourced Atlantic bluefin tuna is available on national and international markets.
- At least thirty million consumers are aware of the importance of sustainable seafood consumption, of their purchasing power and ability to influence the seafood industry to source from sustainable sources.

WE AIM TO

- Have a fully legal, traceable and transparent seafood trade in Mediterranean countries.
- Reach a target of +20% of seafood products in Mediterranean countries certified or coming from sustainable sources.

EXPECTED KEY RESULTS

- National plan of action in key Mediterranean countries in place and implemented to support shark conservation.
- Cetacean bycatch in the Mediterranean is better monitored and reduced by 30%.
- Increased knowledge of important areas for shark and cetacean conservation.
- Halve the number of unintended deaths of sharks, turtles and marine mammals.
- Reduce by half the main threats to marine turtles, cetaceans, sharks and rays and monk seal populations.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- The mortality rate of fin and sperm whales is reduced (halved in the Pelagos Sanctuary) through the reduction of ship strikes and the establishment of new PSSAs.
- Conflict between fisheries and monk seals is minimized through legislation and/or the creation of pilot management measures (e.g. an octopus nursery).

4. PROTECT OUR WILDLIFE

THEORY OF CHANGE

Healthy populations are at the heart of healthy and resilient ecosystems, especially populations of top predators such as sharks and monk seals. The Mediterranean is home to vulnerable and critically endangered wildlife which suffers from the increasing expansion of human activities. WWF works to significantly reduce threats to marine wildlife by supporting the wider use of proven mitigation technologies and seeking innovative new ones in partnership with fishers, tourism operators and retailers.

With fishers and the fishing industry we will tackle unintended marine wildlife mortality by focusing on the widespread use of unselective fishing gears; with decision makers we will leverage new policies to spur slow-to-respond management into action. Innovation coupled with more accessible monitoring technology and fisheries management tools will drive the changes needed to achieve our goals of healthy wildlife populations that fulfill their ecological, cultural and socio-economic roles.
The Mediterranean needs us – and we need the Mediterranean, to sustain our life and our economy. Let’s work together to chart the route to a different future for the Mediterranean, where people live in harmony with nature.

The Mediterranean Marine Initiative is an open invitation from WWF, a call to action for all those who care about the future of the Mediterranean Sea and the millions of livelihoods that depend on it.

#TOGETHERPOSSIBLE

**WE ACT FOR THE BENEFIT OF SOCIETY**
To foster a sense of community and belonging for the health of our planet.

**WE COMMIT TO CONSUME RESPONSIBLY**
To ensure our seas remain vibrant and productive for future generations.

**WE STRIVE TO CONSERVE ECOSYSTEMS**
To maintain biodiversity and the benefits it provides for human wellbeing.

**WE FIGHT TO PROTECT WILDLIFE**
To achieve our goals of healthy and thriving wildlife populations.

**WE PROMOTE A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY**
Together we can chart a different future for the Mediterranean Sea.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

- ACCOBAMS: Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area
- AIP: Aquaculture Improvement Project
- ASC: Aquaculture Stewardship Council
- CFP: Common Fisheries Policy
- CSO: Civil Society Organization
- EC: European Commission
- EBSA: Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas
- EU: European Union
- FIP: Fishery Improvement Project
- GFCM: General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
- GMP: Gross Marine Product
- ICCAT: International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
- IUCN: Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania
- IUCN: International Union for the Conservation of Nature
- IUU fishing: Illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing
- LIFE: the EU’s financial instrument supporting environmental, nature conservation, and climate action projects
- MedAC: Mediterranean Advisory Council
- MedPAN: Network of Managers of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean
- MMI: Mediterranean Marine Initiative
- MPA: Marine Protected Area
- MSC: Marine Stewardship Council
- MSP: Marine Spatial Planning
- NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
- PSIM: Port State Measures (to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing)
- PSSA: Particularly Sensitive Sea Area
- SAD: Underwater Research Society – Mediterranean Seal Research Group, Turkey
- SSF: Small-scale Fisheries
- SUNCE: Association for Nature, Environment and Sustainable Development, Croatia
Why we are here
To stop the degration of the planet’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

mediterranean.panda.org

© Panda Symbol WWF - World Wide Fund For Nature (Formerly World Wildlife Fund)
© “WWF” is a Registered Trademark

Contact:
Giuseppe Di Carlo, Director
gdicarlo@wwfmedpo.org
Stefania Campogianni, Marketing and Communications Manager
scampogianni@wwfmedpo.org