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## Current Status of Consumed Fish in Alicante, Spain and Several Locations in Tunisia, and a Survey in a Marine Protected Area

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### [Background & Purpose]

Fishery is one of the most important industries within the Mediterranean region. The most dominant fleet from the viewpoint of employment is the artisanal fishing fleet. In spite of the importance that fishery has in Mediterranean, the lack of awareness of the necessary management measures has resulted in a high fishing pressure that nearly collapsed the regional fisheries. From 1975, when General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean was made, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) began to appear within the region. To understand the status of Mediterranean fisheries, market research in locations in Spain and Tunisia, and a survey in “Isla de Nueva Tabarca”, the first MPA in Spain, were conducted.

### [Activities]

First, fish market surveys were done in 3 cities (Alicante, Villajoyosa and Santa Pola) in Spain and 3 cities (Kelibia, Tunis, Bizerte) in Tunisia in order to understand the fish species consumed and their price/kilo so that results from both countries could be compared. Second, a survey on the MPA “Isla de Nueva Tabarca” was done in order to understand the background of its setting, the allowed activities within the area and its present problems.

### [Achievement]

Thirteen common species were identified, including Gilthead bream *Sparus aurata*, European seabass *Dicentrarchus labrax*, Norway lobster *Nephrops norvegicus*, European Hake *Merluccius merluccius* and while 35 species were seen in Spain and 24 in Tunisia, the prices in Spain were twice as expensive as those in Tunisia. Research on the MPA of “Isla de Nueva Tabarca” showed that 2 zones are “open” for fishing activity under regulation. In the “Interior zone” a small-scale set-net called “Moruna”, troll lines and gillnets are allowed for local fishers. While in the “Exterior zone”, a set-net called “Moruna xirreteres” and all kinds of fishing involving bait except for long lines are permitted. Scuba diving and scientific research are also permitted under regulation. The MPA’s ecosystem is mainly based on meadows of a “sea grass” called *Posidonia oceanica*, which acts as a nursery area and has important roles in the growing, reproducing and feeding of species important for fisheries that need to be well protected. Aside from protecting the *Posidonia oceanica* meadow, placement of artificial reefs also helped fish populations to recover. In spite of regulations, illegal fishing was seen several times during this survey. In addition, local fishers are concerned about the potential damage from tourism to the MPA. Inexperienced divers might have caused damage to the sea grass meadow, as it has been sometimes observed.