

FOREWORD

Dolphinfishes (*Coryphaena hippurus* and *Coryphaena equiselis*) (Pisces: Coryphaenidae) are highly migratory, epipelagic oceanic species that are distributed world-wide in tropical and sub-tropical seas. They constitute a valuable seasonal resource for small-scale fleets and for recreational fisheries, which exploit them by taking advantage of their aggregatory behaviour under floating devices. This behaviour is common to several species, mainly during their juvenile phase. Thus, the fishery also exploits other by-catch species such as carangids (e.g. *Naucrates ductor* and species of the genus *Seriola*). Like other medium-size pelagic fishes, dolphinfish show rapid population expansion, occupy depleted fishing zones and support a high fishing pressure.

For many centuries, dolphinfish has been an important food source for the inhabitants of the Mediterranean Sea. As in other areas where the exploitation of dolphinfish is expanding, the Mediterranean landings of this species have increased regularly in recent years. Nevertheless, there was a scarcity of data on the biology, migratory patterns and exploitation of this species in the area. Consequently, the assessment and management of these fisheries is difficult. For this reason, within the framework of a Biological Study Project of the EU (PDP 95/73), undertaken by Spanish and Italian institutions, an International Workshop was held from October 20th to October 23th 1997 at the Universitat de les Illes Balears. This workshop was convened by CSIC/UIB-Institut Mediterrani d'Estudis Avançats and IEO-Centre Oceanogràfic de les Balears, with the participation of guest scientists of international standing and expertise or interest in the biology and fishery of dolphinfish and other related species. The aims of the workshop were to compile all existing data on the biology and fishery of dolphinfish, to identify the issues that need further research, and to lay the basis for the correct development and management of this fishery in EU waters.

A wide participation in the workshop, including 34 scientists from different countries, covering the dolphinfish distribution, gave a general overview of the present situation of these species. The workshop was divided into four sessions: (i) experimental fisheries and fish assemblages associated to fish aggregation devices; (ii) biological parameters, population structure and migration patterns; (iii) fisheries, population dynamics and management; (iv) aquaculture development and poster session. The first three sessions have been maintained as chapters in the organisation of the present volume. Most papers contributed to the workshop are presented here, with some additional ones contributed later. We trust that the scientific information and the discussions will advance our knowledge of the biology, ecology, exploitation and assessment of dolphinfish and related species.

Finally, the editors would like to acknowledge the facilities provided by the Universitat de les Illes Balears, and the organisation of the Seminar by Ms. Elena Batanero (CSIC/UIB-IMEDEA). We also wish to thank all the participants, in particular those who have contributed scientific papers, and Dr. Pere Oliver (FAO, Rome) who helped us in the initial steps of the workshop. We are also grateful to the DG XIV of the EC for funding the workshop and to the DG Pesca (Govern de les Illes Balears) for funding the present publication. Last but not least, we are grateful to SCIENTIA MARINA for providing space for it on its pages.

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