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Assessorato delle Attività Produttive  
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## FORUM FOR AFRICA AND THE GREATEST MIDDLE EASTERN AREA

### CONTEXT

Concerning the economic and institutional cooperation carried out over the years by the Fisheries Production District, with the support of the Sicilian Region, in the African and the Greater Middle Eastern Area, it is needed to continue and strengthen the initiative to promote and develop the district model among economic operators of these areas.

In the light of the changed economic and political scenarios that have characterized the coastal countries, Sicily, in particular in the field of fisheries and maritime activities, can and must play a leading role in the area of cooperation of the Mediterranean basin to promote the economic, social, institutional and cultural integration conditions necessary to develop the sustainable development of the coastal populations.

Since 2007, the Region and the District have successfully started Scientific and Industrial Cooperation Programs and signed commercial agreements with Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Mozambique, Republic of Congo and Tunisia, according to the principles of the European Union and following the dictates of the EU Regulations.

Both inbound and outbound missions and relations with third countries on fisheries aimed at establishing specific centers of cross-border cooperation that, in a univocal design, come together in the common goal of development and integration of the fishing supply chain, the enhancement of migration and financial flows, the research and innovation promotion, the cultural and scientific cooperation through the sharing and the consistent implementation of common projects for investment and technology transfer in the fisheries sector, aimed at the integrated management of fishery resources.

Fishing is highly dependent on access to maritime space and on healthy marine ecosystems. In an atmosphere of strong competition, the growing awareness of the crucial role played by the Mediterranean Sea and the increasingly urgent need to preserve and ensure the rational exploitation

have made of the fishing environmental sustainability a fundamental aspect well recognized by all actors.

In this context, the strategy of the Sicilian Region and Production District Fishing - COSVAP, was to launch the construction of a larger partnership in the fisheries sector and related activities, based on a new model of economic development: the cluster. This allows us to give more visibility and power to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), offering them the opportunity to enjoy easier and more profitable the public, scientific and research Institutions services, and the business, financial and insurance systems.

The actual reform effort involves also the EU policies. Now it is time to fully exploit the potential and new tools developed by the new Common Fisheries Policy, whose objectives are to make the fishing system responsible, sustainable and environmentally friendly, safeguarding fish stocks and the fishing system *in sensu latu*.

These objectives can be achieved today with the new European financial instruments. The European Fund for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, which will take over the new 2014-2020 programming, devotes a large part of the budget to business initiatives designed to enhance and strengthen the existing entrepreneurial fish system increasingly pressed by the structural crisis of the fishing system.

It is for this reason that starting from the integration and development model of our District, we are aiming to achieve, together with the other coastal countries, the "Mediterranean Fisheries District" meant to represent a unique scientific and production area shared among all the actors in the Mediterranean and beyond, aiming to the creation of an area of peace, security and shared prosperity.

The Mediterranean District, directing to streamline and standardize operations in the field of marine resources in the whole basin, acts as central hub to integrate mutually functional realities in an area of high socio-economic and employment impact, starting from the fishing and spreading to other sectors and other districts in a context of widespread cooperation.

It should be noted, on this subject, the extraordinary social value which is the basis of the dialogue that the Mediterranean District supports, in order to create a positive climate between the Coastal countries of the Euro-Mediterranean macro-region also in the fishing sector, well known cause of complex disputes.

Today, however, we need to extend this model to other African and the Greater Middle Eastern countries characterized by micro / small businesses that need a know-how transfer and integration into a larger system in order to become more competitive. The Sicilian fish farms can play a major role in the transfer of knowledge and technology.

The implementation of a successful cross-border cooperation with the Mediterranean countries and beyond is considered strategic for the significant benefits of collaboration on issues relating to energy costs and the global financial crisis, which have weakened the low economic resilience of the fishing industry, and for the ensuing socio-economic implications: work on logistics, international business start-ups, services aimed at improving the supply chain, professional training.

The Forum has as its main interlocutor the Observatory for the Mediterranean fisheries of the District which can be able to involve the following countries: Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Jordan, Greece, Egypt, United Emirates, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Montenegro, Mozambique, Oman, Qatar, Tunisia,

Turkey, Syria, Yemen, and the following observer countries of Sub-Saharan Africa: Gabon, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Angola and Republic of Congo.

The Forum is therefore the ideal place to promote the dialogue, the exchange of scientific knowledge among Mediterranean and beyond coastal countries, on issues related to the fishing industry in *latu sensu*, in order to share and experience the application in the concerned states of the Italian typical development model: the **Industrial and Productive District**.

It should be considered as a real laboratory of economic and social development, considered strategic by our Governing Bodies.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT**

A few years ago, a process of exchange / promotion was started. In this process, the Sicilian navy is the protagonist of a possible and necessary process of scientific and productive cooperation, aimed at the creation of common markets, of shared productive activities, possibly with the establishment of Joint Ventures aimed to fishing and aquaculture production, to fish processing and enhancement.

From the economic and employment point of view, the importance of the sector requires actions to streamline and make more efficient and sustainable the fishing activities and to represent a form of support to living conditions in the area.

At the same time, given the general importance of the sector, we need to identify and possibly to enable the qualitative and quantitative expansion potential of activities and overall development of the sector in a perspective of **environmental sustainability**, economic compatibility, increase of employment and income of fishermen and stabilization of the cooperation forms between the Sicilian component and that of the African and Greater Middle Eastern countries, minimizing the conditions of potential conflict in the concerned areas.

It is also relevant, in the current situation of the fishing sector, to implement the aspects related to safety of life at sea and the welfare of fishermen.

It is useful that this effort is developed with the support of a specialized body in the fisheries sector as the Fisheries Production District of Mazara del Vallo, with a strong specific know-how, able to transfer experiences, operational solutions, techniques and methods.

## **EXPECTED RESULTS**

- ✓ Improvement of living and economic conditions of the Sicilian fishing industry operators (shipbuilding, fishing, related activities, aquaculture, processing and marketing).
- ✓ Development of the fishing product.
- ✓ Development of a common productive model to be exported.
- ✓ Implementation of "Best Practices".