The capacity to quantitatively assess the status of fisheries stocks and evaluate the trade-offs of management actions is an important asset to make informed decisions in fisheries management. Most well management fisheries rely on some form of stock assessment as basis for management advice, varying from the data demanding and costly methods used in large-scale and high-value fisheries to the less data intensive approaches used in some small-scale fisheries.

In the context of the Mediterranean and Black Sea region, FAO have a long history of actions towards the improvement of the knowledge on the status of stocks as well as the management of fisheries, namely through the work of the General Fisheries Commission of the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the FAO Regional Projects AdriaMed, CopeMed, EastMed and MedSudMed. The European Commission Joint Research Center has been giving stock assessment trainings since 2012 to support the stock assessment technical groups of the STECF Committee in both Mediterranean and Black Sea. Despite the observed improvements in the quantity and quality of the stock assessments in the Mediterranean region, there are still large differences in technical capacities on new methods and tools among Mediterranean and Black Sea countries, hampering, in some cases, a more productive collaboration in the assessment of stocks at the sub-regional level as well as in the provision of advice in support of decision making. In addition, a large number of stocks remain unassessed because of inadequate data and/or approaches to deal with assessments in data-limited situations. Closing these gaps will require a continuous improvement of national capacities in fish stock assessment through appropriate education and training programmes, as the FAO/GFCM/JRC Summer School in Quantitative Fisheries Stock Assessment. Such improvements will be instrumental to meet the objectives of the GFCM Mid-term Strategy (2017–2020) and of the MedFish4ever Declaration, towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries.

With the objective to enhance and maintain a high level of technical expertise in fish stock assessment in the region, FAO Projects AdriaMed, CopeMed, EastMed and MedSudMed, GFCM and JRC organized in the last two years the “Summer School in Quantitative Fisheries Stock Assessment”. The Summer School is intended to offer a regular and extended learning opportunity to fisheries scientists from the Mediterranean and Black Sea to keep up to date with new methods and tools for the assessment of stocks, and with the ultimate aim to create a pool of experts that can enhance the provision of advice on the status of stocks within the framework of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) of the GFCM and the stock assessment EWGs of the STECF. The first edition of the Summer School, held in 2017, was attended by a total of 34 participants from 10 countries. The second edition in 2018 had 48 participants from 13 countries.