

Habitat: *Cymodocea* meadows

OSPAR Recommendation 2014/12:

Contracting Parties are required to report progress with implementation of recommendations every six years, with initial more frequent reporting until 2019.

Measures taken by Contracting Parties to protect *Cymodocea* meadows include the development of MPAs and management plans, monitoring and investigation of their contribution to blue carbon



Description

Cymodocea nodosa forms large and dense patches with green leaves than can reach 100 cm long and 8 mm wide in well sorted fine sands or on superficial muddy sands in sheltered waters and depths of 1-30 meters. *Cymodocea nodosa* is found in the Mediterranean Sea and in the warmer regions of the Atlantic Ocean, from southern Portugal to the northwestern African coasts. In the OSPAR area, the distribution range of the Atlantic population falls entirely on the Iberian Coast, limited to Portugal and Spain. The Sado Estuary is the northern limit of its distribution.

Action Highlights

Each Recommendation requires Contracting Parties to report on the methods used to implement the measures. The methods are Legislation, Administrative action and Negotiated agreement, or any combination of these. France and Spain have introduced national legislation:

1. All meadows are in protected areas in Spain which have management plans
2. Spain has a regional monitoring programme in Andalusia, and are researching the carbon sink potential
3. Spain has designated several MPAs
4. Spain ensures EIA process address potential impacts
5. Spain applies the Law on protection and sustainable use of the coastal areas and is currently working on a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for the Spanish Coast
6. The seagrass atlas of Spain has raised awareness. Academics also promote the value of seagrasses.

Engagement

The engagement index (left) measures how well Contracting Parties have engaged with the national measures in the Recommendation. The higher the score the greater the number of actions that Contracting Parties, which have reported, have taken to implement the measures in the Recommendation. Click here for more information on the index.

References:

- Background Document for *Cymodocea* meadows (OSPAR Publication 487)
- OSPAR Recommendation 2014/12
- OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (Agreement 2008-06)

Condition

The habitat is in decline across the region and its extent has reduced of the last 30 years. This could be caused by a number of factors including industrial and nutrient pollution, coastal development, shellfish dredging, vessel anchorages and harvesting. The geographic isolation from other populations of *Cymodocea nodosa* in the south-western Iberia also inhibits its sexual reproduction and provokes a low genetic variability (the nearest populations are located more than 300 km away, in northern Africa and the Mediterranean Sea). Both factors are important in the conservation of this species since colonization can only occur through vegetative growth.



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