



ICCAT Press Release

ICCAT agreed the implementation of a Management Procedure for Atlantic bluefin tuna and a new conservation measure for tropical tunas

Closure of the 23rd Special Meeting of the Commission

21 November 2022 – Three years after the last in-person annual meeting, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) met in Vale do Lobo (Algarve, Portugal) to take important decisions on the regulation of ICCAT fisheries, including a novel management procedure for bluefin tuna - the first adopted harvest strategy in ICCAT history for this species, and a new conservation measure for South Atlantic shortfin mako shark.

The Commission convened to evaluate the results of the 2022 work plan together with the current status of application of the regulatory measures in force and to establish the conservation and management measures for the future. In 2022, full scientific stock assessments were carried out for four species: **eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna** (*Thunnus thynnus*), **eastern and western skipjack** (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), **Atlantic swordfish** (*Xiphias gladius*) and **North-eastern Atlantic porbeagle shark** (*Lamna nasus*). In total, 13 new Recommendations and 4 Resolutions were adopted covering relevant issues on Atlantic tuna and tuna-like species conservation and fisheries management.

ICCAT has for the first time in its history adopted a management procedure for Atlantic bluefin tuna. This novel measure, which is the result of the extensive collaboration among scientists, managers and stakeholders, should ensure long-term, sustainable and profitable fisheries of both the western stock and eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean stock. The TAC set for the period 2023-2025 was set as 2,726 and 40,570 metric tons for western and eastern Atlantic (and Mediterranean) stocks, respectively.

Following the 2021 adopted measure for North Atlantic shortfin mako shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries, this year ICCAT agreed a similar measure for South Atlantic shortfin mako starting in 2023, to end overfishing immediately and to gradually achieve biomass levels sufficient to support maximum sustainable yield (MSY) by 2070 with a probability ranging between 60 and 70% at least. The total annual fishing mortality was set to a maximum of 1,295 t until new scientific advice is provided to the Commission in 2024.



New management measures were also agreed for both North and South Atlantic swordfish stocks. For the North Atlantic swordfish a rollover was agreed, and the TAC for 2023 was kept at the 2022 level (13,200 t), in accordance with SCRS advice. For the southern stock a TAC of 10,000 t was agreed for the period 2023-2026.

Regarding albacore tuna, the Commission adopted a plan for Mediterranean albacore, which implements a 15-year rebuilding plan until 2036, that establishes a TAC of 2,500 t. In addition, ICCAT adopted catch limits for southern Atlantic albacore for the period 2023 to 2026, that includes a TAC of 28,000 t for the period 2023 to 2026.

Albeit the extensive discussions regarding multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas, no progress was achieved. Therefore, an agreement was reached for a simple rollover of the current measures, which implies a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for bigeye tuna of 62,000 t for 2023 and the 72-day FAD fishing closure. The annual TAC for yellowfin will remain at 110,000 t. In addition, in order to reduce the fishing mortality of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna, a 72-day fishing closure and the limitation on the use of FADs in 2023 were also kept. Finally, it was decided that an intersessional meeting of Panel 1 will be held in 2023 to review existing measures and, *inter alia*, develop catch limits and associated catch verification mechanisms for 2024.

The Compliance Committee this year concentrated on some fundamental issues and adopted a Schedule of Actions for compliance issues in the future and also adopted a Recommendation on the use of the Integrated Online Management System.

The ICCAT Chair, Mr. Ernesto Penas, in his final address, thanked all Contracting Parties for agreeing on a number of management and control measures for ICCAT fisheries, as well as to protect marine biodiversity, such as that to reduce the accidental catches of marine turtles. He also highlighted the adopted management procedure for Atlantic bluefin tuna, the new conservation measure for South Atlantic shortfin mako shark, as well as on the progress made on matters related to the fight against illegal fishing and the establishment of a joint surveillance and inspection schemes. However, he also mentioned that no consensus could be reached on the multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas. Therefore, he urged ICCAT Contracting Parties to continue bilateral or multilateral consultations to overcome some of the difficulties inherent to the most relevant issues that will be addressed in the 2023 Commission meetings. Finally, he thanked the Executive Secretary and his team for the work conducted throughout the year and congratulated him for the renewal of his mandate.

ICCAT expressed its gratitude to Dr Gary Melvin's many years of contribution to ICCAT's scientific work, and specifically as Chair of the SCRS for the past four years. ICCAT also welcomed Dr Craig Brown as incoming the SCRS Chair.

Finally, ICCAT would like to express its sincerest gratitude to all CPCs and its partners for their valuable contributions to the success of the meeting. We will be looking forward to meeting you in November 2023, at the 28th Regular Meeting of the Commission in Egypt.

The meeting was attended by over 400 in-person delegates and 250 more online, from 47 Contracting parties, 5 Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties, 6 intergovernmental organizations, 26 Non-Governmental Organizations and 2 Non-Contracting Parties.

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List of adopted Recommendations and Resolutions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution by ICCAT on climate change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT on the application on the integrated online management system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution by ICCAT establishing a pilot project to test the use of stereoscopic cameras during first transfer and the automation of video footage analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 06-14 to promote compliance by nationals of Contracting Parties, Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities, or Fishing Entities with ICCAT conservation and management measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 21-18 on the application of the eBCD System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution by ICCAT on development of initial conceptual management objectives for western Atlantic skipjack
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT replacing Recommendation 21-01 on a multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 21-06 to establish a rebuilding plan for Mediterranean albacore
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution by ICCAT on a pilot project for the short-term live storage of bluefin tuna
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 21-08 establishing a multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT establishing a management procedure for Atlantic bluefin tuna to be used for both the western Atlantic and eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean management areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT for a conservation and management plan for western Atlantic bluefin tuna
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT on the southern Atlantic albacore catch limits for the period 2023 to 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT on the conservation of the South Atlantic stock of shortfin mako caught in association with ICCAT fisheries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT on the bycatch of sea turtles caught in association with ICCAT fisheries (combine, streamline, and amend Recommendations 10-09 and 13-11)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT replacing supplemental Recommendation 21-03 extending and amending Recommendation 17-03 for the conservation of South Atlantic swordfish
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT replacing supplemental Recommendation 21-02 extending and amending Recommendation 17-02 for the conservation of North Atlantic swordfish
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules and Procedures for the protection, access to, and dissemination of data compiled by ICCAT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule of compliance issues and corresponding actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document Number on Transshipment Declaration