



POSITION PAPER

2011

# EAST ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN BLUEFIN TUNA

## 22nd Regular Meeting of ICCAT

Istanbul, Turkey, 11-19 November 2011

In 2010 ICCAT adopted a new multi-annual recovery plan for the East Atlantic and Mediterranean stock of bluefin tuna following a prior mandate to ensure recovery to  $B_{MSY}$  level by 2022 with at least 60% probability. This plan relied on a stock assessment that showed that a TAC of between 0 and 13,500t per year would deliver on this goal. However SCRS warned against considerable uncertainty, not taken into account in the assessment, calling for greater precaution.

In 2010, WWF advocated a TAC within the range of 0-6,000t, to stay on precautionary grounds. ICCAT CPCs finally supported a TAC of 12,900t, a non-precautionary level close to the upper range of the advised TAC. This decision contradicted WSSD's Johannesburg commitments and even the internal legislation of the EU (the main CPC involved in this fishery), that provides for the need to reach  $B_{MSY}$  of stocks before 2020. A new stock assessment will be conducted in 2012 which will be used by ICCAT for the review of management measures next year.

## WWF RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Improve the BCD scheme

The BCD scheme adopted by ICCAT in 2007 is crucial to ensuring control of the Atlantic bluefin tuna fishery through ensuring traceability. However, the current paper-based system is highly dysfunctional and it is generally agreed that it has to give way to an electronic-based scheme to become fully operational.

**WWF supports the full implementation of Recommendation 10-11 providing for ICCAT CPCs to amend Recommendation 09-11 at the 2011 annual meeting so that the eBCD system is fully operational by 1 March 2012. In addition, WWF calls on ICCAT CPCs to provide the necessary funding to the ICCAT Secretariat to make this possible.**

### 2. Ensure a proper assessment of fish caged at farms

Recommendation 10-04 requests ICCAT CPCs to perform pilot studies and to explore ways of calculating the biomass of tuna transferred from fishing vessels and caged in farms through stereoscopic systems or other technical methods. The information reported this year to SCRS falls very short of showing a net improvement in this matter. Besides, new studies (see document SCRS/2011/160) now point to much

lower rates of growth in farms than formerly believed (some 20-30%, contrasting to figures above 100% formerly reported by industry sources), increasing fears of potential laundering of above-quota catches.

**WWF calls on ICCAT CPCs to either ensure full traceability in farms or to ban farming practices if this is not technically feasible.**

### 3. Mandate the Secretariat to routinely crosscheck all the available information on the fishery, to feed ICCAT CoC discussions

Despite all problems related to traceability during the farming process, the information currently available to ICCAT CPCs and to the ICCAT Secretariat on the bluefin tuna fishing season in the East Atlantic and Mediterranean is globally unique. Cross-checking the BCD database with observers' reports from the ROP and inspection reports from the ICCAT Joint Scheme of International Inspection would allow the identification of potential compliance shortcomings.

**WWF calls on ICCAT CPCs to mandate the ICCAT Secretariat to routinely perform this work and to promptly submit the results to the ICCAT Committee on Compliance (CoC), and to provide the required means for this.**

#### 4. Ensure a real phase-out of fleet overcapacity by 2013

The provisions in force on the reduction of fleet capacity aim at ensuring a perfect fit of fleet capacity with fishing possibilities by 2013, thus fully eliminating overcapacity. The capacity reduction plan adopted in 2009 has been very effective in reducing fleet overcapacity in the East Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna fishery, which has been the main driver for overfishing. However, as a recent study by WWF points out (SCRS/2011/158), the catch levels per fleet segment currently taken as a reference in the plan—particularly those for purse seines—are strongly underestimated. This results in real capacity levels much higher than those nominally achieved through the implementation of the plan. In other words, fleet overcapacity and the associated room for IUU fishing still remain.

**WWF calls on ICCAT CPCs to take all necessary steps to amend the current capacity reduction plan to ensure the complete elimination of overcapacity by 2013.**

#### 5. Enable a reliable stock assessment

Current management measures are based on the stock assessment that was carried out in 2010. However, severe limitations regarding both data availability and stock assessment methodology undermined the reliability of results. WWF strongly supports the current effort by SCRS and ICCAT's project GBYP to enable a far more accurate assessment of East Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna in the near future.

**WWF calls on ICCAT CPCs to make available all necessary means, including submitting data and providing the necessary funds, to enable a reliable stock assessment as soon as possible.**

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To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.