



POSITION PAPER

2011

MEDITERRANEAN SWORDFISH

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The dire situation of the Mediterranean stock of swordfish has long been a matter of great concern for WWF. In 2002 WWF publicly deplored the European Council Regulation EC/973/2001 derogating the minimum landing size in force since 1994, which was set at 120cm LJFL. This happened despite scientific reports warning of the high catches of juveniles in the region, including ICCAT Resolution 2000-05 of 2000 recognizing the need for further protection measures for swordfish juveniles. WWF's study on Moroccan driftnet fleets targeting swordfish in 2003 contributed to a process that is currently culminating in the effective destruction of Moroccan driftnets and the real phase-out of the concerned fleet.

The most recent stock assessment carried out by the ICCAT SCRS in July 2010 clearly depicts a situation of severe overfishing and warns, again, of the unsustainably high catches of juveniles. Indeed, it shows how the fishery underwent a rapid expansion in the late 1980s which entailed a sharp decline in levels of spawning stock in only a few years. The population has remained at historically low levels since then.

WWF RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the advice of the ICCAT SCRS and recent experience with the ICCAT bluefin tuna recovery plan, WWF recommends the following as the minimum measures to be included in an ICCAT recovery plan for the Mediterranean stock of swordfish:

1. A six-month closure covering the entire recruitment period

2. A minimum catch size set at the scientifically determined size of first maturity for females (140cm)

3. A multi-annual capacity reduction plan, similar to that in force for the Atlantic bluefin tuna, based on the following elements:

- A register of authorized active vessels (irrespective of their length) effectively fishing for swordfish in the Mediterranean. The current list should be urgently updated
- Capacity tables on a CP-basis based on standard catch rates per fleet segment, as determined by SCRS
- Setting of an annual ceiling of Total Catch Capacity

(TCC), established at less than 80% of the mean yield of the last decade (11,415t)

- Allocation of catch capacity quotas among CPs out of the annual TCC
- Establishment of a 3-year capacity reduction plan gradually decreasing the gap between real catch capacity and catch capacity quotas, until fully eliminating the gap after the 3rd year.

4. The establishment of a Swordfish Catch Document Scheme (based on individual tail tagging)

5. A set of technical measures, strictly following scientific advice, to minimize juvenile bycatch.

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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.

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