



MESSAGE FROM THE ICCAT EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The ICCAT Secretariat has the pleasure to present its readers with ICCAT Newsletter No. 20, informing of the latest events and activities of our Organization.

We trust you enjoy reading this Newsletter and the Secretariat will be pleased to receive any suggestions aimed at improving this publication.


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RECENT MEETINGS

2014 has been a year of a lot of work for ICCAT. Since the previous Newsletter, five intersessional meetings of the Commission, nine SCRS meetings, and a meeting of the eBCD Technical Working Group have been held.

INTERSESSIONAL COMMISSION MEETINGS

 **Joint Meeting of the Compliance Committee/Panel 2 and Special Intersessional Meeting of the Permanent Working Group (PWG)**



The meetings were held in Madrid, Spain, 3-7 March 2014. In the COC/Panel 2 meeting the East Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna fishing, inspection and capacity control plans were approved and the call for tenders for the ROP-BFT was approved and finalized. At the same time, the PWG reviewed the development of the eBCD system and discussed the technical and regulatory considerations with a view to an extension of the development contract.

2nd meeting of the Working Group on Convention Amendment




The meeting was held in Barcelona, Spain, 19-23 May 2014. The objective of this meeting was to make progress on draft texts for those issues which had been identified as requiring revision in the Convention, and to discuss issues which could be resolved by other means.

 **9th meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM).**




The meeting was held in Barcelona, Spain, 22-24 May 2014. The objective of this meeting was to continue with the work to integrate monitoring measures in an extensive management framework. Coinciding with this meeting, the eBCD Technical Working Group held a meeting to define the technical requirements for an extension of the system development contract.

 **First meeting of the Standing Working Group to enhance dialogue between fisheries Scientists and Managers (SWGSM)**



The meeting was held in Barcelona, Spain, 26-28 May 2014. This Standing Working Group, established to foster dialogue between fisheries managers and scientists, at its first meeting, focused its discussions on the use of BRMS and FRMS and other approximations as limit and/or target reference points in a precautionary management environment and on potential improvement regarding the ICCAT management and science processes, taking into account the development of the Strategic Plan by the SCRS.

 **2nd Meeting of the Working Group of Fisheries Managers and Scientists in support of the western Atlantic bluefin tuna stock assessment.**

The meeting was held in Prince Edward Island, Canada, 10-12 July 2014. The objective of this second meeting was to review the results of the previous meeting of the Group and review the research plans, presented by CPCs, aimed at obtaining reliable stock abundance indices.

SCRS INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS

 **Intersessional Meeting of the Sharks Species Group**



The meeting was held in Piriápolis, Uruguay, 10-14 March 2014. The objective of the meeting was to collect and analyze available information on shark biology and fisheries under the ICCAT mandate, in order to assess the viability of carrying out stock assessments in the future. Particular attention was paid to the blue shark (*Prionace glauca*), scheduled to be assessed in 2015. The Group also identified the main sources of data uncertainties aimed at completing the Shark Research Programme proposed, in particular with regard to economic requirements and research priorities.

 **Meeting of the ICCAT Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods**

The meeting was held in Dublin, Ireland, 11-15 March 2014 with the objective, among others, of providing guidance on the evolution and possibility of harmonizing methods to apply for uncertainty characterization across species groups in order to provide risk-based advice to the Commission, to continue the evaluation of advice using Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) and to establish guidance on



best practices to reconcile or combine assessment results when multiple modelling methods to estimate the status of the stock relative to ICCAT conservation benchmarks are used.

Meeting of the Strategic Plan Group

The meeting was held from 14-16 April, Madrid, Spain. The meeting was focused on the development of the Science Strategic Plan for the 2015-2020 period. This plan will be submitted to the consideration of the SCRS and later to the Commission in 2014.

Bluefin Data Preparatory Meeting.

This meeting was held in Madrid, Spain, 5-10 May 2014. The meeting had a double objective: to carry out the data preparatory work and establish a work plan to update the 2014 stock assessment, as well as to integrate new Task II information in the ICCAT databases and continue with the work on new modeling platforms and inputs in the attempt to minimize uncertainties in the 2015 and ongoing assessments.

Billfishes Species Group Intersessional Meeting

The meeting was held in Veracruz, Mexico, 2-6 June 2014. This Group analyzed existing billfish fishery statistics; tagging data and other information on biology and other aspects of billfish life-history, with the objective of identifying gaps and uncertainties in the data and develop a work plan to obtain the information required in future assessments.

Skipjack Stock Assessment Meeting



The meeting was held in Dakar, Senegal, 23 June to 1 July 2014. The objective of this meeting was to evaluate the eastern Atlantic and western Atlantic skipjack stocks. The Group also revised the Feasibility Study for the Atlantic Ocean Tropical Tuna Tagging Program (AOTTP) carried out within a short term ICCAT contract.

Mediterranean Swordfish Stock Assessment meeting

The meeting was held in Heraklion, Greece, 21-25 July 2014. The objective of this meeting was to update the results of previous Mediterranean swordfish stock assessments, as well as to develop and to apply alternative stock assessment approaches. The Group also evaluated the effects of the management framework and provided advice on possible amendments of the various measures with a view to recover or to maintain the stock within safe biological limits while delivering economically viable fishing activity.

Intersessional Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Ecosystems

The meeting was held in Olhão, Portugal, 1-5 September 2014. This meeting had different objectives pertaining to by-catch and to Ecosystems. As regards to by-catch, the meeting was focused on revising and updating the ecological risk assessment of the impact of ICCAT fisheries on sea turtles and to provide advice based on the results, as well as to review seabird by-catch mitigation measures.



Regarding ecosystems, the main objectives were to identify where the ecosystem based fishery management (EBFM) can be implemented by ICCAT, as well as develop and refine the potential framework for its application.

Detailed Reports of the Intersessional meetings of ICCAT are available, in their provisional version, on the ICCAT Web site (www.iccat.int). Further to the final approval by the SCRS and the Commission, the reports are published in the ICCAT Collective Volume of Scientific Papers or in the ICCAT Biennial Reports.

CALENDER OF EVENTS

September

- *Meeting of the Technical Working Group on eBCD*, 18-20 September 2014, Madrid, Spain. During the meeting priorities and technical specifications will be defined to complete the system. An international scenario to test the system will be scheduled and the training manuals will be discussed. Likewise, the issues to be posed to the Commission will be identified.

- *Species Group meetings*. 22-27 September 2014, Madrid, Spain. These meetings will be held to update the biological information and the available statistics on all the species under ICCAT mandate. The Bluefin Tuna Species Group will carry out the update of THE stock assessment which was carried out in 2012. The Sub-Committee on Statistics will hold a meeting that same week to review data submissions, as well as the progress made in the development of the Secretariat's databases.

October

- *Standing Committee on Research and Statistics*. 29 September to 3 October 2014, Madrid, Spain. The SCRS will meet to review the status of all stocks and prepare responses to the Commission concerning scientific issues. This year, the SCRS will adopt the Strategic Plan for the 2015-2020 period elaborated by the Committee for the past two years.

Scientists who wish to present documents to the SCRS meeting should contact the Secretariat.

November

- *19th Special Meeting of the Commission*. 10-17 November 2014, Genoa, Italy. The Commission will review the results obtained from numerous stock assessments carried out during 2014 to adopt the recommendations and resolutions for the management of these resources.

For further information, Agendas, etc. for these meetings, please see our Web site: www.iccat.int and <http://www.studiovialevondergoltz.it/eventi/iccat/> for hotel reservations in Genoa.

SECRETARIAT ACTIVITIES

The Secretariat has continued to support the activities of the SCRS and the Commission.

During 2014, the Secretariat has continued to implement:

- the Bluefin tuna Regional Observer Programme (ROP-BFT) on vessels and in fattening farms during the 2014 fishing campaign and
- the Regional Observer Programme for Transshipments

The deadline for the implementation of the Regional Observers Programme for BET/YFT is January 2015, however the implementation of this Programme will depend on requests and funding received.

Moreover, it has also continued with the coordination and technical support for the implementation of the eBCD system which is in the phase of the extension of the development and

support contract until the end of the 2015 fishing campaign. In parallel, the Secretariat is working in the presentation of the project within the framework of the GEF/ABNJ Programme with the objective of obtaining co-financing for it.

Tasks related to the entry into force of the Recommendations adopted in 2013 have also been undertaken. In order to try to consolidate the various lists of vessels currently required in a manner compatible with other tuna RFMOs for the Consolidated List of Vessels required through the KOBE Process, the Secretariat has redesigned the vessel database.

Atlantic Wide Research Programme for Bluefin tuna (GBYP)

GBYP Phase 4, started in May 2013 and will terminate in December 2014. This phase includes a limited data recovery activity, an extended tagging programme in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, biological and genetic sampling and analyses activities, and an extended aerial survey on spawning aggregations and further modeling approaches. More than 35 institutions from various ICCAT CPCs are conducting these activities.

Recently, the ICCAT-GBYP Web pages have been fully revised and all the reports and documents produced by the GBYP can be found on: <http://www.iccat.int/GBYP/en/>.

The tag recovery and awareness campaign (<http://iccat.int/GBYP/en/AwCamp.asp>), initiated in 2011, was further improved in 2014 and it is providing good results.

Since the last edition of the *Newsletter*, published in February, members of the Secretariat staff have assisted meetings and activities related to ICCAT:

- *Stakeholder Meeting on the Revision of the Data Collection Regulation (Brussels, 16 January 2014).*
- *iMarine data platform for collaborations (Rome 7 March 2014).*

→ *Regional consultation/validation workshop to support the implementation of IOTC Resolutions on Port State Control (Johannesburg, 1-4 April 2014).*

→ *Informal Consultation of States Parties to the Agreement meeting of the United Nations, 1995 (New York, 7-8 April 2014).*

→ *Meeting of the Regional Fishery Bodies Secretariats' Network (RSN) (Rome, 7 June 2014)*

→ *37th Session of the Committee on Fisheries of FAO (Rome, 9-13 June 2014)*

→ *"Our Ocean" Conference, organized by the U.S. Secretary of State (Washington DC 16-17 June 2014).*

→ *2014 meeting of the OSPAR Commission (Cascais, 23-26 June 2014).*

→ *9th Session of the Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation among States Bordering the Atlantic Ocean (COMHAFAT) (Rabat, 6-8 September 2014).*

During the COFI meeting a Steering Committee meeting was held on the Kobe process to review progress in implementing Kobe recommendations. In particular, regarding updated questionnaires, as well as the progress on CLAV and the ongoing work of the Working Groups in by-catch and Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE). The Committee also discussed the following steps to be taken in the Kobe process.

ICCAT played an active role in the various meetings with written and/or oral contributions.

During this period, the Secretariat staff has given a training course on stock assessment methods in Morocco.

Apart from the activities mentioned above, the Secretariat is responsible for the maintenance of the joint Web page of tuna RFMOs (<http://www.tuna-org.org/>).

ASSISTANCE FUNDS FOR DEVELOPING STATES

ICCAT has established funds to encourage the improvement of statistics of species under ICCAT mandate. Currently, there is a budget on special funds for data improvement established by *Resolution by ICCAT on Improvements in Data Collection and Quality Assurance* [Res. 03-21].

These funds are supplied by voluntary contributions made by some Contracting Parties.

During 2014 the capacity building funds, initiated in 2008 by the United States and aimed at supporting training on collection, data analysis, stock assessment methods, as well as the funds of the ICCAT-Japan Data and Management Improvement Project, (JDMIP), initiated in 2004, became available.

In 2011, the Commission adopted the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the Establishment of a Meeting Participation Fund for Developing ICCAT Contracting Parties* [Rec. 11-26], which establishes a special Meeting Participation Fund (MPF) of representatives from ICCAT Contracting Parties which are developing States.

Later, in 2013, the Commission adopted the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the Establishment of a Scientific Capacity Building Fund for Developing States which are ICCAT Contracting Parties* [Rec. 13-19], which establishes a special Scientific Capacity Building Fund (SCBF) supporting scientists from those ICCAT Contracting Parties which are developing States in their need to acquire knowledge and develop skills on issues related to ICCAT.

Since the last Newsletter, these funds have financed the activities for statistical improvement and the participation of many of scientists to different SCRS and Commission meetings.

PUBLICATIONS

The following publications were issued in 2014:

Report for Biennial Period, 2012-2013, Part II (2013) Volumes 1 and 2, corresponding to the 2013 Commission Proceedings and 2013 SCRS Report. Since 2008, Volume 3 is exclusively published in electronic format and only the summaries of the reports are translated into ICCAT's official languages.



The Volume is published on the ICCAT web site. In 2014, a fourth volume including the Secretariat report on Statistics and Coordination of Research, the Administrative and Financial reports, as well as the Secretariat's report to the Compliance Committee of the Conservation and Management measures of ICCAT (COC) and the Permanent Working Group for the Improvement of Statistics and Conservation Measures (PWG), have been published for the fourth time. This volume is published only in electronic format like Volume 3.

Six (6) issues of the Collective Volume of Scientific Papers, Volume 70.



Statistical Bulletin # 42 (I), which includes catch series by species and country since 1950. As of this year, the publication on paper will be biennial, carrying out annual updates which will be available, in electronic format, on the Web and on CD.

OTHER NEWS

A *historic figure* of the ICCAT Secretariat, Philomena Seidita (*Phil*), retired in March.



In the latter period of her many years of work at the Secretariat, Phil dedicated a lot of effort to maintain the high standards of ICCAT publications.

Through this Newsletter, her colleagues from the Secretariat wish her every success in this new stage of her life.

In March, the former Assistant Researcher to the GBYP Coordinator since 2011, Dr. M'Hamed Idrissi, became a permanent staff member of the Secretariat as Compliance Coordinator. Dr. Idrissi is a highly qualified expert in Atlantic fisheries.

All recent ICCAT publications can be downloaded from <http://www.iccat.int>

To obtain copies of older publications please contact INFO@ICCAT.INT
