



## MESSAGE FROM THE ICCAT EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The ICCAT Secretariat has the pleasure to present its readers with **ICCAT Newsletter No. 21**, informing about the latest events and activities of our Organisation.

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## RECENT MEETINGS

### 2014 MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND STATISTICS (SCRS)

The SCRS held its meeting from 29 September to 3 October 2014, in Madrid, Spain. The report of the meeting was published, in print version, in March 2015, as part of the ICCAT Biennial Reports. The electronic version is available on the ICCAT web site.

In 2014, the SCRS carried out stock assessments of East and West Atlantic skipjack, Mediterranean swordfish and West Atlantic, East Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin.



In addition, the Committee adopted the 2015-2020 Science Strategic Plan.

The Sub-Committee on Ecosystems continued to work on the ecological risk assessment of the impact of ICCAT fisheries on sea turtles, and to review the by-catch mitigation measures for seabirds.

The Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods focused its work on improvement of the advice provided by the SCRS to the Commission. In this respect, work was continued on defining a framework for advice within ICCAT using management strategy evaluation (MSE).

As has become customary, the Committee assessed the presentations given at the meeting and the winning rapporteurs were awarded Basque berets (*chapelas*) and the Secretariat received a special beret.



In 2014, the SCRS elected a new Chairman, upon conclusion of the second term of office of Dr Josu Santiago. Dr David Die, an internationally renowned scientist with extensive experience in the work of the SCRS, was elected. The Committee acknowledged and thanked Dr Santiago for his excellent work at the head of the SCRS and welcomed Dr Die as the new Chairman.



 **19th Special Meeting of the Commission**

The 19th Special Meeting of the Commission was held in Genoa, Italy, from 10 to 17 November 2014. The meeting was opened by Italy's Under Secretary of State for Fisheries and was chaired by Mr. Stefaan Depypere. The warm reception and the excellent organisation by the Government of Italy ensured the smooth running of the meeting.

The meeting was characterised by the presence of numerous prominent personalities from the various Contracting Parties, in particular, participation by the relevant ministers from Albania, Côte d'Ivoire and Curaçao.



At its 19th Special Meeting, the Commission adopted the following thirteen Recommendations and a Resolution:

*Recommendation by ICCAT on a Multi-Annual Conservation and Management Program for Tropical Tunas. [Rec.14-01].*

*Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Implementation of an Atlantic Ocean Tropical Tuna Tagging Programme (AOTTP). [Rec.14-02].*

*Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish an Ad Hoc Working Group on Fishing Aggregating Devices (FADs). [Rec.14-03].*

*Recommendation by ICCAT Amending the Recommendation 13-07 by ICCAT to Establish a Multi-Annual Recovery Plan for Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean. [Rec.14-04].*

*Recommendation by ICCAT Amending the Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Rebuilding Program. [Rec.14-05].*

*Recommendation by ICCAT on Shortfin Mako Caught in Association with ICCAT Fisheries. [Rec.14-06].*

*Recommendation by ICCAT on Access Agreements. [Rec.14-07].*

*Recommendation by ICCAT to Support Effective Implementation of Recommendation 12-07 by ICCAT for an ICCAT Scheme for Minimum Standards for Inspection in Port. [Rec.14-08].*

*Recommendation by ICCAT Amending Recommendation 03-14 by ICCAT Concerning Minimum Standards for the Establishment of a Vessel Monitoring System in the ICCAT Convention Area. [Rec.14-09].*

*Recommendation by ICCAT to Harmonize and Guide the Implementation of ICCAT Vessel Listing Requirements. [Rec.14-10].*

*Resolution by ICCAT establishing guidelines for the cross-listing of vessels contained on IUU vessel lists of other tuna RFMOs on the ICCAT IUU vessel list in accordance with Recommendation 11-18. [Res.14-11].*

*Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish an Ad Hoc Working Group for Preparing the Next Performance Review. [Rec.14-12].*

*Recommendation by ICCAT Amending the Recommendation by ICCAT for Enhancing the Dialogue Between Fisheries Scientists and Managers. [Rec.14-13].*

*Recommendation by ICCAT Amending the Recommendation 11-26 on the Establishment of a Meeting Participation Fund for Developing ICCAT Contracting Parties. [Rec.14-14].*

The Recommendations will enter into force on 3 June 2015.

The full texts of the Recommendations and Resolutions are available on the ICCAT web site: [www.iccat.int](http://www.iccat.int).

[Rec. 14-02] established the implementation of an Atlantic Ocean Tropical Tuna Tagging Programme (AOTTP) for the major stocks of tropical tunas (bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin), as well as for neritic small tunas which are of great importance to coastal populations. In accordance with this Recommendation, the Secretariat is taking the necessary steps for its implementation, which are specified in the feasibility study that has been carried out.

The roadmap defined within the Kobe process entailing periodic performance reviews of tuna RFMOs is being followed. The Commission decided to initiate ICCAT's second review by establishing a Working Group to define the terms of reference of this second assessment.

The Commission also agreed a one-year extension of the contract for development of the Electronic Bluefin Tuna Catch Document (eBCD) System, maintaining the paper-based and electronic formats of the system for the same period.

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2015

In 2015, the following events are scheduled to be held: eight SCRS inter-sessional meetings and six Commission meetings, in addition to several coordination meetings within the framework of the GBYP and two working meetings of the Technical Group on electronic BCDs which are to be held in the first quarter of the year.

Below are the meetings scheduled until publication of the next issue of the *Newsletter* which will be released in September.

### February

✓ *Meeting of the ICCAT Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods, 16-20 April, Miami, United States.* Among other objectives, the Group will continue with the assessment of scientific advice through management strategy evaluation (MSE) and will schedule a simulation study to incorporate the spatial changes in the environmental and oceanographic conditions in the assessment processes.

✓ *Inter-sessional Meeting of Panel 2 and 10th Meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM), 23-27 February, Madrid, Spain.* The main objective of the Panel 2 meeting is to adopt bluefin tuna fishing, inspection and capacity management plans. The objectives of the IMM are to define the objectives and requirements of the regional and national observers, to review the development of the eBCD system and to identify new actions.

### March

✓ *Bluefin Data Preparatory Meeting, 2-6 March, Madrid, Spain.* The objective of this meeting is to incorporate the new Task II information (catch and effort and size frequencies) into the ICCAT databases, as well as to continue with the work related to the new modelling platforms and inputs with a view to minimising the uncertainties in the 2016 assessments and the assessments which are being carried out.

✓ *Blue Shark Data Preparatory Meeting, 23-27 March, Tenerife, Spain.* The objective of this meeting is to collect and analyse the information available for carrying out the blue shark stock assessment.

### May

✓ *Bigeye Data Preparatory Meeting, 4-8 May, Madrid, Spain.* The objective of this meeting is to collect and analyse all existing information required for the Atlantic bigeye stock assessment.

✓ *1st Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on FADs, 11-12 May, Madrid, Spain.* The Commission, at its 2014 meeting, established an Ad Hoc Working Group on Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) [Rec. 14-03] which is to meet in 2015 to start discussions on the number of buoys and their impact on the pelagic and eco-pelagic systems. This Group is open to scientists, managers and other interested parties.

✓ *3rd Meeting of the Working Group on Convention Amendment, 18-22 May, Miami, United States.* The group will identify those measures which require a revision of the Convention, and will establish a work plan to achieve this.

### June

✓ *Inter-sessional Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Ecosystems, 8-12 June, Madrid, Spain.* The Sub-Committee will update the assessment of the impact of tuna fisheries on sea turtles and will continue to make progress on the implementation of ecosystem-based fisheries management.

✓ *Inter-sessional Meeting of the Small Tunas Species Group, 10-13 June, Madrid, Spain.* The objective of this meeting is to create an inventory of available information, and to carry out a preliminary analysis of these data.

✓ *2nd Meeting of the Standing Working Group to Enhance Dialogue between Fisheries Scientists and Managers (SWGSM) and 3rd Meeting of the Working Group of Fisheries Managers and Scientists in support of the Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Stock Assessment, 22-26 June, Spain.* Among other objectives, the SWGSM will review the progress of the SCRS in providing MSE based advice and will identify stocks where HCRs can be implemented, as case studies, and will develop guidelines for their implementation. The second group will continue with the review of different aspects related to the science and management of this stock.

## July

✓ *Atlantic Bigeye Stock Assessment Session, 13-17 July, Madrid, Spain.* The group will carry out the assessment of the Atlantic bigeye stock.

✓ *Blue Shark Stock Assessment Session, 27-31 July, Lisbon, Portugal.* The group will carry out the assessment of the Atlantic blue shark stocks.

In addition to these meetings, the two virtual working groups established by the Commission will work electronically during the year to define the Terms of Reference of ICCAT's second performance review and to define the Commission's communication policy.

In addition, the Technical Group on eBCDs met on 21 and 22 January to identify the development processes of the system which are to be addressed in 2015.

All the information on these meetings is available on the ICCAT web site.  
(<http://www.iccat.int/en/meetingscurrent.htm>)

Scientists wishing to submit documents to the SCRS meetings can download the Guidelines for authors from the ICCAT web site.  
([http://www.iccat.int/en/pubs\\_guidelines.htm](http://www.iccat.int/en/pubs_guidelines.htm))

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## SECRETARIAT ACTIVITIES

The Secretariat has continued to support the activities of the SCRS and the Commission. In particular, during the second half of 2014, the Secretariat focused its efforts on preparing the SCRS and the Commission meetings. As part of this work, the Secretariat prepared a number of documents which were submitted to these meetings. In addition to the standard documents (reports on research and statistics, financial report, compliance report, etc.), the Secretariat prepared working documents to support the discussions of the groups. Since 2011, all the reports prepared by the Secretariat have been published in an independent volume (Vol. 4) of the Biennial Report. During this period, the Secretariat has actively worked to implement the electronic BCD system.

Phase 4 of ICCAT-GBYP (Atlantic-wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna), developed over the course of 2014 and early 2015, has continued with the activities related to data recovery, genetic and biological sampling, aerial surveys of spawners, modelling and tagging. Information and data to September 2014 have been submitted to the SCRS and the Commission.

Due to an unforeseen problem with the financing of Phase 5 and to the need to review the budget and the activities planned, Phase 4 has been extended until 23 February 2015, continuing with the activities related to data recovery, data processing and modelling and, to a lesser extent, with the biological and genetic sampling and tagging programmes.

In December 2014, the first GBYP Core Modelling Group took place. Following this meeting, the complex modelling work on bluefin tuna began to take shape.

The GBYP Steering Committee met from 10 to 12 February 2015 to initiate the activities planned for Phase 5 of the Programme.

All the activities carried out and reports are available at:  
<http://www.iccat.int/GBYP/en/index.htm>.

Moreover, since the publication of the last *Newsletter*, the Secretariat has been represented in external meetings related to ICCAT activities:

✓ *9th Session of the Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation among African States Bordering the Atlantic (ATLAFCO) (Rabat, Morocco, 6 - 8 September 2014).*

✓ *Meeting of the RAC\_MED Working Group 2 (Split, Croatia, 10 October 2014).*

ICCAT played an active role in the different meetings with oral presentation and/or submission of documents.

Following the meeting in Genoa, the Secretariat began the preparatory work for the next Commission meeting which will be held from 10 to 17 November 2015.

The Secretariat has restructured the vessel databases and updated the Guidelines for submitting data and information required by ICCAT.  
(<http://iccat.int/en/SubmitCOMP.htm>)

In addition to the activities referred to above, the Secretariat is responsible for maintaining the joint web site of the tuna RFMOs (<http://www.tuna-org.org/>).

At its 19th Special Meeting, the Commission adopted a large number of recommendations and a resolution which, for the purposes of implementation of the different provisions, require extensive work by the Secretariat. The workload will increase exponentially following their entry into force.

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## ASSISTANCE FUNDS

The objective of these funds is to promote the improvement of ICCAT species statistics and capacity building, as well as to facilitate participation by developing ICCAT Contracting Parties in the meetings and work of the SCRS and the Commission. For this purpose, the Commission has formalised the support through the adoption of specific resolutions and recommendations. In addition to these measures, the SCRS and the Commission have developed protocols for use of and access to the relevant funds.

During the second half of 2014, these funds were used to finance the participation of delegates and scientists from developing coastal States in the Commission and SCRS meetings. Others activities in support of SCRS work were also financed.

Recently, the Secretariat has created a specific page (<http://www.iccat.int/en/meetingsFunds.htm>) on the ICCAT web site, which contains detailed information on the types of existing funds and access to them.

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## OBSERVER PROGRAMMES

The Secretariat has continued to coordinate the implementation of the ICCAT Regional Observers Programme for At-Sea Transshipments and the Regional Observer Programme for Bluefin Tuna. In 2013, six CPCs participated in the ROP for transshipments and eight CPCs in the ROP-BFT, with a total of 17 observers embarked on cargo vessels and 106 on bluefin tuna fishing vessels. The total number of deployments in farming facilities in 2014 was 46, and there have been 6 deployments to date this year (21 February 2015).

The Commission agreed to extend the contracts for the period April 2014 to April 2015 for these two programmes.

At its 2014 meeting, the Commission adopted [Rec. 14-01], whereby the Regional Observers Programme for bigeye/yellowfin was repealed and replaced by national programmes.

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## TAGGING LOTTERY

The annual tagging lottery, created to promote the recovery of tags attached by different laboratories of the ICCAT Contracting Parties, was held this year on 29 September 2014, during the SCRS sessions. The €500 prizes were awarded in the categories of:



✓ Tropical tunas/small tunas. The winning tag carried the number AAA008254 and was recovered from an Atlantic bonito (*Sarda sarda*/BON) by a Spanish citizen, 11 days after it had been applied. The tagging was carried out during the Spanish campaigns.

✓ Temperate tunas. The winning tag carried the number AZ005940 and was recovered from an albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*/ALB) by a Spanish citizen.

✓ Billfish. The winning tag carried the number BF400823 and was recovered from an Atlantic blue marlin (*Makaira nigricans*/BUM) by a citizen of Cape Verde, 1,466 days after it has been applied. The tagging was carried out during the United States campaigns.

✓ Sharks. The winning tag carried the number 345485 and was recovered from a blue shark (*Prionace glauca*/BSH) by a Spanish national 301 days after it had been attached.

Again this year, an additional draw was held supported by the ICCAT Atlantic-wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna (GBYP). There were three prizes in the draw, two for €500 and one for €1,000 exclusively for recoveries from bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*/BFT). The winning tags and the prizes were as follows:

✓ €1,000: The winning tag carried the number BYP017573 and was recovered by a French citizen, 359 after it had been applied.

✓ €500: The winning tag carried the number BYP008559 and was recovered by a Spanish national 723 after it had been attached.

✓ €500: The winning tag carried the number BYP014816 and was recovered by an Australian citizen, 223 days after it had been attached. The tagging was carried out during the Spanish campaigns.

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

To obtain copies of older publications please contact [INFO@ICCAT.INT](mailto:INFO@ICCAT.INT)