

## Towards a more equitable allocation of eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna

*(Discussion paper submitted by the United Kingdom)*

### Background

ICCAT Recommendation 22-08 established an updated multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean, which included an annual TAC for the years 2023-25 that was 4,570 t higher than the TACs established for the years 2020-22.

The UK argued at the time, and continues to believe, that this significant TAC increase provided an ideal opportunity to agree a more equitable allocation of quota among the 17 parties that receive allocations. This could have been achieved without any party's quota decreasing in tonnage terms – all 17 could have benefitted from an increase to their quota as compared to Rec. 21-08.

However only minor adjustments were made, with the result that seven of those 17 parties were allocated 94.9% of the TAC, while the other ten parties were allocated only 5%. Put another way, 89.8% of the additional quota derived from the TAC increase was distributed to those same seven CPCs.

Several CPCs, including the UK, expressed extreme disappointment with this outcome and consensus on Recommendation 22-08 was only reached on the condition that further discussions on allocation would take place.

	<i>% of TAC held under Rec. 21-08*</i>	<i>% of increase received under Rec. 22-08**</i>	<i>% of TAC held under Rec. 22-08*</i>
Seven major harvesters	95.5%	89.8%	94.9%
Ten smaller harvesters	4.2%	11.9%	5.0%

\*Figures do not sum to 100% as they do not account for the unallocated reserve.

\*\*Figures do not sum to 100% due to a reduction in the unallocated reserve.

### Issue

Further discussions at the March 2023 Intersessional Meeting of Panel 2 achieved no progress, despite discussion of various options for a more equitable quota distribution and continued strong calls for change by several CPCs. In concluding that meeting, the Chair invited CPCs to submit proposals on which further discussions could be based. The issue of bluefin tuna allocations therefore remains open.

Negotiations on allocations are typically complex and sensitive, and those on bluefin tuna are perhaps the most complex and sensitive of all. But the UK believes that agreeing a fairer and more equitable distribution of fishing opportunities for this stock is very much within our collective reach, and that we must commit to a pathway to a decision ahead of the next TAC cycle.

We have, at **Appendix 1**, provided a high-level illustration of how the TAC increase agreed could have been more fairly distributed, resulting in increases in quota for all parties while ensuring a fairer approach for the ten smaller harvesters. We would welcome comments and questions on this approach and urge interested parties to share their views.

### UK proposal

The UK therefore proposes, and requests the agreement of Panel 2, to the following:

- i. that Panel 2 continues discussions on this matter, and that the Intersessional Meeting of Panel 2 in March 2024 should be extended by up to two days for this purpose. At that point, Panel 2 should consider if subsequent intersessional meetings should also be extended, and whether it is necessary to schedule further intersessional meetings in 2024 and 2025.
- ii. that Panel 2 commits to making a decision on a fairer and more equitable allocation of fishing opportunities for this stock by no later than the Commission meeting in 2025. This decision would then be applied in distributing fishing opportunities for the next three-year TAC cycle (2026-28).

The UK urges all Panel 2 members to agree to this proposal on a way forward, and to work in a spirit of fairness and cooperation so that good progress can be made.

## How to distribute bluefin quota more equitably – a high-level illustration

This example approach demonstrates how the 4,570 t TAC increase established in 2022 could be distributed more equitably among the 17 interested parties, *ensuring that all 17 receive an increase in quota in tonnage terms*, while addressing the disproportionate nature of the current allocations.

The approach takes the quota levels established in Rec. 21-08, immediately before the current TAC of 40,570 t was established, as a baseline. It considers each of the 17 parties as falling into one of two broad categories of major and smaller harvesters. For these purposes we have categorised any party with an allocation greater than 1,500 t under Recommendation 21-08 as a major harvester (seven parties), and the remaining ten parties as smaller harvesters.

### Stage 1 – Baseline uplifts for all major harvesters

All major harvesters could receive a 5% uplift in quota, noting their contribution to the stewardship of the stock through the stages of the rebuilding plan and the investment their industries have made in the fishery. This would account for 38% (1,719 t) of the 4,570 t TAC increase.

### Stage 2 – Additional uplifts for all parties

The remaining 62% (2,851 t) could then be distributed among all 17 parties, taking a range of factors into account, including for example:

- Developing State status
- Coastal State status
- Relative position in quota/allocation table (with priority given to parties with smaller shares)
- Current utilisation levels

This redistribution would be geared towards ensuring a fairer, more balanced distribution overall, but with a particular focus on ensuring a fairer distribution for the ten smaller harvesters.

### Stage 3 – Other adjustments based on specific circumstances

This stage would allow for individual adjustments based on the specific circumstances of each party. For example, a party which does not want additional quota at that time or another which might have a particular need for a higher uplift.