UNION DES ARMATEURS À LA PÊCHE DE FRANCE

STATEMENT

UNION OF FRENCH FISHING VESSEL OWNERS (UAPF)

29th Regular Meeting of ICCAT
(17–24 November 2025, Seville, Spain)

PANEL 2 – EASTERN ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN BLUEFIN TUNA

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) will hold its 29th Regular Meeting in Seville, Spain, from 17 to 24 November 2025. The UAPF recalls the importance of this meeting for the sector, particularly to ensure that the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna stock remains in good condition through the implementation and continuation of a transparent, precautionary and equitable management framework that benefits all stakeholders.

Our priority is to ensure that decisions remain firmly grounded in science, fairness and compliance — enabling responsible development while safeguarding the achievements made in terms of stock sustainability and the stability of the current management framework.

1. Ensuring the stability of the current management framework

The UAPF calls on CPCs to continue implementing a long-term, precautionary and equitable management framework for the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna stock. As recalled in the letter from the Chair of the Commission (ICCAT Circular 10828/2025) on the priorities for discussion, the recovery of this stock is one of ICCAT's greatest successes. We must therefore maintain high, stable long-term management standards, consistent with SCRS advice and the MSE.

In 2025, the SCRS reviewed the results of the Close-Kin Mark-Recapture (CKMR) project for the western bluefin stock. This genetic method for identifying parent–offspring relationships enables a direct estimate of adult biomass. The SCRS considered the results scientifically robust and a major advance in understanding stock structure and improving model calibration. Two TAC options for 2026–2028 were presented:

(1) The management procedure adopted in 2022 (BR): 48,403 t;
(2) The same procedure recalibrated with CKMR (BR*): 45,191 t.

The CKMR analysis led to an upward revision of the spawning biomass of individuals aged eight and over in the western stock, improving biological consistency with the eastern stock. The SCRS stressed that these results should be fully integrated into the MSE once all analyses are consolidated. It therefore recommended:

- Continuing CKMR work for the eastern stock;
- Awaiting full validation of the data before modifying the management procedure;
- Maintaining a precautionary approach to any increase in TAC.

Recent SCRS simulations indicate that projections incorporating CKMR suggest a stabilization — or even a slight decline — in spawning biomass by 2035 if the higher TAC of 48,403 t is applied. An excessive quota increases in 2026 could therefore force a sharp reduction as early as 2029.

In this context, the UAPF underlines the need to **set the TAC at 45,191 tons for 2026–2028**, in line with the precautionary option (BR*), in order to avoid a "boom-and-bust" cycle and to preserve sustainability gains.

2. **Ensuring transparent, science-based and equitable allocation rules**

The UAPF takes note of the Chair's proposal (PA2_612) as a constructive basis but requests clarification on the proposed allocation categories, notably:

- New entrants: justify tonnage and test alternative scenarios (50/100/200 t);
- Small operators: avoid overly subjective allocations that ignore actual capacity and fleet structure;
- Developing CPCs: clearly define eligibility criteria and explain the rationale for the proposed two-tier treatment;
- PG indices: quantify contribution, time series and weighting;
- Small-scale fisheries: provide a transparent methodology and publish corresponding fleet lists.

To ensure transparency and legitimacy, the UAPF requests:

- Publication of methodologies, formulas and data sources;
- Demonstration tables, sensitivity analyses and consistency checks with Recs. 22-08 and 96-14.

The UAPF stresses that the EU and its fleets have consistently complied with ICCAT conservation measures, played a decisive role in rebuilding the stock and borne significant socio-economic adjustments. Any increase or reallocation must therefore promote responsible development without penalising those who have already demonstrated compliance and commitment.

Accordingly, the UAPF calls for:

- Application of allocation **rules consistent with Rec. 14-04** for the "pro-rata increase" component, in line with Rec. 22-08;
- **Automatic payback mechanisms for overharvests** (100% – minimum 125% in case of recurrence);
- Maintenance of an **equitable and transparent reserve mechanism**;
- Equal application of the up-to-20% carry-over rule, based on verifiable evidence of genuine fishery development.

3. Fair treatment and accountability among CPCs

The UAPF insists on equal treatment among CPCs:

- **CPCs with documented IUU histories or recent COC alerts should only receive additional quotas under verifiable compliance conditions;**
- CPCs that consistently underutilize their quotas should not be disproportionately rewarded;
- Development rights for new fleets are legitimate but must not come at the expense of those that contributed to stock recovery.

4. Supporting MSE and long-term stability

The UAPF supports strengthening the bluefin tuna MSE and calls on ICCAT to:

- Prioritize funding and technical resources for its improvement;
- Ensure a multi-fleet, multi-gear approach;
- Avoid ad hoc allocation experiments outside the MSE framework;
- Maintain stable management based on scientific indicators and harvest control rules.

CONCLUSION

The Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna represents a global success story for ICCAT. To safeguard this achievement, the UAPF calls for the adoption of a transparent, science-based and equitable allocation system anchored in precaution and recognition of past efforts and compliance.

A TAC of 45,191 tons, the application of Rec. 14-04 for pro-rata increases, strict compliance guarantees, and transparent criteria for new mechanisms will ensure the continued success of this stock and fair benefits for all CPCs.