

IPNLF Position Statement

to

29th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)

IPNLF is pleased to participate in the 29th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). The Commission has an important opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to long-term sustainable tuna management which prioritises the needs of small-scale, low impact fisheries and science-based conservation measures which protect the broader ocean ecosystem from the impacts of fishing.

Allocation of Fishing Opportunities

One-by-one fisheries, like pole-and-line and handline, have minimal impact on tuna stocks, least interaction with the broader ecosystem, and the greatest socio-economic benefits for communities in coastal states. Allocation systems based on historical catch levels often perpetuate unfair access to fishing resources, jeopardise livelihoods in coastal fishing communities, and risk repeating historical cycles of decline. Any allocation system developed by ICCAT should recognise and prioritise the development of the most low impact, socially beneficial fishing methods, in line with Article 6.6 of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Indeed, Article 6.6 requires that “Where proper selective and environmentally safe fishing gear and practices exist, they should be recognized and accorded a priority in establishing conservation and management measures for fisheries”.

Currently, ICCAT allocates fishing opportunities under principles laid out in ICCAT Recommendation 15-13 which considers the needs of small-scale coastal fishers and dependent communities, taking into account the socio-economic role of a fishery. However, the environmental impacts of a fishing method are not recognised under the Recommendation.

Key asks:

- The Commission should move away from basing allocation primarily on historical catches and instead begin to **prioritise those with the greatest socio-economic benefits and lowest environmental impact** in order to maintain a sustainable fishery and ensure food security in the Atlantic.
- **Update Recommendation 15-13** to preferentially **recognise the environmental impact of different fishing methods** on stock abundance and ocean ecosystems.

Tropical Tunas

IPNLF is pleased to see the signs of stock recovery for bigeye tuna, as reported by the SCRS earlier this year, supported by management measures to reduce catches of juvenile tuna. IPNLF understands that the Commission will now be racing to increase the total allowable catches for bigeye tunas again. However, we urge the Commission to take a **precautionary approach** in this regard. It is in the best interest of the Commission to allow the stock to continue to replenish itself.

In regard to yellowfin tuna, IPNLF are pleased to see the beginning of discussions on conservation measures. We share the concerns of many delegations in regard to the total allowable catch (TAC) for this stock which has been consistently exceeded between 2018 and 2022.

Key asks:

- Adopt **precautionary TAC limits for bigeye tuna** in line with the scientific advice.
- Allocate bigeye tuna TAC equitably to **meet the needs of small-scale, low impact fishing fleets**.
- For yellowfin, the Commission should implement an **inclusive, equitable allocation system and stronger enforcement measures** to prevent catches beyond the TAC, with suitable consequences for overcatch.
- **Advance management procedures** for tropical tunas, and **adopt a management procedure for western skipjack**, noting the importance of this fishery for coastal fishing communities using low-impact, one-by-one methods.

Drifting FADs

Drifting FADs (dFADs) remain a concern for stock health and the broader ecosystem and ICCAT's measures are not as advanced as in other tuna RFMOs, in particular in regard to the timeline for the implementation of biodegradable FADs, FAD limits, and FAD monitoring.

Further, the analysis in Section 19.30 of the [Meeting Report of the SCRS Meeting 2025](#) shows a marked decline in stock abundance with the introduction of dFAD fishing, which now accounts for almost 50% of the impacts on the bigeye stock. The dFAD fishery continues to be given large shares of quota based on historical catch data despite its problematic impacts.

Key asks:

- **Maintain the existing dFAD closure** to ensure impacts on juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna are minimised as far as possible to prevent future declines.
- **Set annual accrurement limits for dFADs** under the understanding that, without such annual accrurement limits, dFADs can be deployed and deactivated freely, rendering the adopted FAD limits ineffectual.
- Adopt an effective **FAD marking scheme** for both structure and buoy.
- Develop and adopt a timeline to implement a **FAD register**.

- Develop and adopt rules for a **real-time dFAD monitoring system** (dFAD-MS).
- Adopt clear rules for FAD ownership as well as buoy activation and deactivation.

Atlantic Bluefin Tuna

IPNLF urges the Commission to take their mandated precautionary approach to the bluefin fishery and prioritise low-impact fishing methods, especially in regard to the Atlantic bluefin fishery, given the history of the stock and the slow-growing nature of the species.

Key asks:

- **Use the management procedure** to set a precautionary new TAC for bluefin tuna.
- CPCs with **solely one-by-one fishing methods**, like Canada and the UK, should be supported and prioritised. We highly commend the fishing plan put forward by the UK which intends to maintain a handline-only bluefin fishery as they expand.
- **Pay attention to the scientific research** on the mixing of east and west bluefin stocks and begin to work towards a more equitable distribution of fishing opportunities.

South Atlantic Albacore

IPNLF congratulates ICCAT on the significant progress made on the development of the management strategy evaluation (MSE) framework for south albacore and the consistent good status of this stock.

Key asks:

- Noting Resolution 24-09 on the development of initial operational management objectives for south Atlantic albacore, IPNLF urges the **timely adoption of final management objectives** to permit advancing the implementation of management strategy evaluation.
- **Bring forward the date for MSE** for south Atlantic albacore to have the Management Procedure adopted in 2027, rather than 2029.
- It is IPNLF's position that the **needs of developing coastal States should be prioritised over distant water fishing nations** in regard to the distribution of fishing opportunities.