

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE
CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC TUNAS



COMMISSION INTERNATIONALE POUR LA
CONSERVATION DES THONIDES DE L'ATLANTIQUE

COMISION INTERNACIONAL PARA LA
CONSERVACION DEL ATUN ATLANTICO

Madrid, 24 June 2025

ICCAT GBYP CIRCULAR # G-00415/2025

SUBJECT: CALL FOR TENDERS - BIOLOGICAL STUDIES - ICCAT ATLANTIC-WIDE RESEARCH PROGRAMME FOR BLUEFIN TUNA (GBYP) (ICCAT GBYP - PHASE 14-2025)

Please find attached the Call for Tenders - Biological Studies – ICCAT Atlantic-Wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna.

I would be grateful if you could distribute this Call for Tenders to qualified people and institutions that might be interested.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration

P.O. *Executive Secretary*

Miguel Neves dos Santos
Assistant Executive Secretary

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Attachment: Call for Tenders



Call for Tenders Biological studies

Atlantic-wide research programme on bluefin tuna (ICCAT GBYP – Phase 14-2025)

Background and objectives

The main objectives of the ICCAT Atlantic-Wide Bluefin Tuna Research Programme (GBYP) are to improve: (a) the understanding of key biological and ecological processes, (b) current assessment methodology, (c) the management procedures, and (d) advice.

Key tasks to achieve these objectives are biological sampling and analyses, which provide indispensable data for conducting the bluefin stock assessment and Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process, in line with the aforementioned objectives.

Consequently, one of the core activities of GBYP are the so-called Biological Studies, under which in 2011 GBYP started a biological sampling programme that complements those carried out by CPCs, aiming to ensure the availability of representative samples to carry out the studies required to develop proper stock assessments. Most of the sampling activities have been carried out under ad hoc Calls for Tenders for sampling and sample analysis. Additional samples have been collected separately in farms (adult fish) and, opportunistically, by the ICCAT Regional Observer Programs (ROPs) and GBYP tagging teams.

The resulting biological samples, including otoliths, spines, gonads and muscle for genetic studies are stored in the GBYP tissue bank. In parallel to sampling activities, microchemical, genetic, histological and morphological analyses have been carried out based on the samples from this tissue bank, according to the recommendations provided by the SCRS and the GBYP Steering Committee.

In GBYP Phases 13 and first year of Phase 14, following the recommendations of the SCRS adopted by the Commission in 2022 and 2023, GBYP biological studies focused on genetic analyses aiming at informing a feasibility study for the potential implementation of a Close-Kin Mark-Recapture (CKMR) study for the determination of the absolute abundance of the Atlantic Bluefin tuna (BFT) Eastern stock, which is one of the main uncertainties affecting Atlantic BFT Stock Assessment. However, during the 24th Special Meeting of the Commission held in November 2024, the workplan for the effective implementation of a CKMR study in the Eastern Atlantic BFT stock from 2025 onwards, was not accepted. Therefore, during the [BFT Species Group Intersessional Meeting](#) (Sète, 8-11 April 2025), the BFT Species Group (SG) updated the BFT SG workplan for 2025, setting a series of research priorities not related to CKMR implementation.

Consequently, considering the previous SCRS workplans adopted by the Commission, and the recent recommendations from the BFT SG, the priorities for the Biological Studies for the second year of GBYP Phase 14 (2025) that are addressed through this Call for Tenders include the following specific objectives:

1. Expanding sampling to support further genetic studies on stock structure, including:
 - Development of the current knowledge on interbreeding in the Slope Sea;
 - Filling knowledge gaps to inform mixing.
2. Maintain and improve a GBYP tissue bank capable of providing the samples required to carry out the studies necessary for improving the understanding of key biological and ecological processes affecting BFT, particularly stock piling samples that can be used for population-level genomics studies.

3. Improve the knowledge on populations structure required for bluefin tuna stocks evaluation and management, paying special attention to the data requirements derived from the implementation of the MSE approach, focusing on:
 - Further understand the interbreeding between eastern and western Atlantic BFT through the analyses of larvae and adults from Slope Sea, aiming at determining the potential genetic homogenization of Atlantic bluefin tuna populations, and their adaptability to anticipate the effect of changing environmental conditions;
 - Further characterize mixing dynamics of Atlantic BFT populations based on the available data and complementary analysis of genetic and otolith data, including identification of gaps where sampling or data generation efforts are required. The effect of methodological aspects and/or analytical choices on the mixing perception that is input to the MSE process should be characterized, considering the knowledge on spatial structure.
4. Consolidate the implementation of an Information System allowing for the proper management of the samples and data generated by the biological studies, integrating not only metadata on sampling and analytical tasks, but whenever possible, the results from such analyses.

In order to fulfil these objectives, the tasks to be carried out are detailed in the following section.

As part of this programme, scientific institutes and/or public or private entities are asked to submit tenders to carry out the entire project or its single components.

Contractor tasks

The tenderer will work in close consultation with the GBYP coordination team. Samplings will follow the [Sampling protocol](#), taking into account the strata reported in the attached table. Also, duplication (i.e., of existing national or other sampling programs) must be carefully avoided.

The analyses will mostly follow the [methodologies](#) already established in previous Phases.

Although ICCAT Recommendation 11-06 provides the means to ensure better conditions while carrying out biological and genetic sampling activities in international waters and those under jurisdiction of coastal States, most of which are ICCAT CPCs, the Tenderer will be responsible for all necessary agreements with local authorities, local fishermen and industries when carrying out sampling within national jurisdictions.

The biological samples collected and/or analyzed will be property of the ICCAT at the end of the contract.

The Tenderer(s) will provide proposal(s) for the provision of the following services:

Maintenance and management of the GBYP tissue bank:

- a) Provide appropriate storage for any biological samples collected so far, after reception and quality checking, following the system already adopted. The Tenderer will also ensure correct storage of all samples that will be collected under this Call for Tenders eventually, coming from other GBYP contracts or MoUs (i.e., biological samples from tagging activities). Management will also include delivery of the necessary samples to the entities in charge of the analyses. If one of the tenderers was engaged in previous Phases, it will provide at the beginning of the contract a full detailed catalogue of all samples available in the GBYP tissue bank, including all residuals from previous Phases; the catalogue will be detailed by stratum and size classes and will be updated at the end of the contract.



Sampling:

- b) Specification of the biological data and samples to be collected; i.e. larvae, otoliths, other hard parts, tissue samples, sex ID, etc., by strata and size class including a clear prioritization under the budget. These samples should be complementary to those collected within the frameworks of CPCs sampling programs. The sampling should be designed to cover key geographic areas to better understand mixing dynamics with implications for the MSE, as well as potential interbreeding between West and East stocks in the Slope Sea spawning area. The sampling strata are defined in the attached table.

If necessary, the tenderer(s) could update the Protocols for the biological and genetic sampling and the analyses to be conducted (e.g. individual weight and length should always be recorded for all samples); the current protocol is available [here](#). These protocols will provide the opportunity for carrying out several analyses on the same otolith (e.g. ageing and elemental composition), optimizing the collection efforts.

Analyses:

- c) Perform genetic analyses of bluefin tuna samples, focusing on:
- determining potential interbreeding between Eastern and Western stocks;
 - Characterizing genomic mechanisms affecting adaptation at the earliest development stages;
 - Determine the stock of origin.

For the provision of the analysis of the item c the tender must include a summary table with the type and number of analyses that will be conducted on the samples collected or already stored and their respective cost per analysis.

Information System:

- d) Update and refine, following ICCAT GBYP guidelines, the currently available database on the samples included in the GBYP Tissue Bank, advancing in the integration of metadata on sampling, analytical tasks and the results from these analyses.

The Tenderer(s) should endeavor to ensure full coverage of priority sampling strata (considering what is specified above) and analyses of the maximum possible number of samples. Proposals covering one or more points from a) to d) can be submitted; therefore, the Tenderer(s) can optionally apply for all or several tasks or for a specific task or sub-set of sampling areas. The Tenderer(s) will also clearly identify availability for the scientific staff to participate in any GBYP Operational Meeting at short notice. In the case of a consortium or group of entities, an administrative and a scientific responsible entity should be identified, along with a Scientific Committee on which each entity carrying out a scientific duty will be represented by a scientist.

Contractor minimum qualifications

- Documented multi-year experience in tuna biological studies (preferably bluefin tuna); previous experience in large-scale biological sampling.
- For the genetic specialist(s): documented multi-year experience of genetic analysis; previous studies on tuna species will be preferred.
- Availability of sufficient qualified scientific staff to carry out the duties.
- Availability of at least one specialist in managing biological databases.
- Excellent working knowledge of one of the three official languages of ICCAT (English, French, Spanish). Sound knowledge of English is highly desirable.



Request for bids

Interested entities should submit an offer to the ICCAT Executive Secretary, [Mr. Camille Jean Pierre Manel](#), with copy to [Ms. Stasa Tensek](#) by **7 July 2025**, including:

- a) The detailed offer covering one or more points from a) to d) as detailed above.
- b) The curricula of the scientific staff.
- c) The curriculum of the institution(s) or entity(ies) applying for the GBYP Biological Studies for second year of Phase 14, with any documented experience in these fields, including recent and relevant contracts for the same or similar items and other references (including contract numbers, points of contact with telephone numbers and other relevant information).
- d) The preliminary estimated budget for collection and analysis of samples, tissue bank maintenance, information system further development and management, to be detailed by individual task and subtask. The costs of coordination should be included in the cost of each individual task/subtask. Additionally, the budget will be broken down by these components: personnel costs, overhead, travel, consumables, equipment and subcontracts. An overhead to cover administrative and general costs could be accepted up to a maximum limit of 10% of personnel costs, while subcontracts can be allowed up to a maximum of 40% of the budget. Any discount terms will be clearly mentioned.
- e) The name, address, and telephone number of the tendering body.
- f) The institutional and administrative background of the tendering body (e.g., statutes, type of institution, annual budget, budget control procedures, etc.).
- g) A detailed list of any subcontracting activities.
- h) A declaration that the offering institution will follow the [Sampling protocol](#) and the definition of sampling strata as provided in the attached table, as well as this Call for Tenders and the administrative rules specified in the contract.
- i) A declaration that all the comments eventually made on the draft final report (**Deliverable #3**) will be incorporated into the final report (**Deliverable #4**) prior to submission to the ICCAT SCRS.
- j) A declaration that the staff and all the subcontracted staff will be covered by full insurance for the sampling activities and the laboratory work to be carried out according to the Call for Tenders, excluding ICCAT from all the responsibility concerning the work to be carried out by each offering institution.
- k) Acknowledgment of this Call for Tenders (if applicable).
- l) A statement specifying the extent of agreement with all the terms, conditions, and provisions included herein.

Offers that fail to furnish the required documentation or information, or that reject the terms and conditions of the Call for Tenders, may be excluded from consideration.

Contractors can be either research institutions such as government or private laboratories, universities, or private consultancy firms or other entities having the qualifications required.

The Contractor should be available to report to any meeting requested by ICCAT.

The Contractor will be available for any GBYP inspector at any time, at short notice.

The ICCAT Secretariat will make a selection of the offers and will decide the contract(s) to be awarded.

Deliverables

#1 A short report on sampling or research activities, including all protocols for samplings and the analyses (for those tasks only), including the description of the work carried out up to that date, to be submitted at the latest 30 days after signature of the contract.

#2 An update of the short report on the sampling and analyses activities (for those tasks only) or on the activity to be submitted at the latest by **15 October 2025**, including the description of the work carried out up to that date.



#3 A draft final report to be submitted by **10 December 2025** at the latest, including:

- I. The scientific report, taking into account relevant scientific literature, containing:
 - a) A full description of the work carried out during the biological studies;
 - b) A detailed description of the methodology and protocols (only for sampling and analyses activities);
 - c) Maps of the areas in which the sampling or the research was carried out, in accordance with the biological sampling strata or the proposal;
 - d) Detailed tables with the definitive number of samples by stratum, fishery, size class and type, with the related statistical analysis (for those activities) or tables showing the results of the field research activities;
 - e) A detailed description of the analyses carried out and of the results achieved (for these tasks only);
 - f) The detailed and updated catalogue of samples stored in the GBYP Tissue Bank; link(s) with the ICCAT Secretariat database (if available) (for this task only);
 - g) An Executive Summary of the final report.
- II. A PowerPoint presentation of the main results.

#4 The final report, to be prepared taking into account any comments provided by ICCAT, and the full administrative report including copies of all the administrative documents, and to be submitted by **20 December 2025**, at the latest.

Payment details

Disbursements will be made according to the following schedule:

1. 30% of the total amount of the contract upon **signature of the contract**;
2. 25% upon completion and acceptance of **Deliverable #1**;
3. 25% upon completion and acceptance of **Deliverable #3**;
4. 20% after the approval of the final report (**Deliverable #4**) upon incorporation of comments by the GBYP and approval of the administrative documents.

Selection of proposals

The ICCAT Secretariat will review the offer(s). Following the revision process, the ICCAT Executive Secretary will notify the entity selected for the contract as soon as the selection process is completed. The contract will be awarded on the basis of competitive tendering and the evaluation of proposals will be undertaken objectively, consistently and without bias towards particular suppliers.

Proposal(s) will be evaluated against a pre-determined set of criteria, which include: i) cost (30%); ii) proven track record (30%); iii) technical merit based on workplan (30%); and iv) flexibility as regards future changes in requirements (10%).

Logistics

All documents provided by the Contractor must be in MS Word or compatible software, tables must be in Excel format or compatible, figures and pictures must be in JPEG or TIFF format or compatible. The format of the data bank will be agreed with the ICCAT Secretariat. All documents submitted must be in English, French or Spanish.



Copyright

All of the material produced by the Contractor will remain the property of GBYP and it must be kept confidential.

For further information concerning this Call for Tenders, please contact the GBYP Coordinator, [Mr. Francisco Alemany](#).