

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, 19 July 2024

ICCAT GBYP CIRCULAR # G-00514/2024

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

Please find attached the Call for Tenders - Biological Studies - Atlantic-Wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna (GBYP).

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

Executive Secretary

Camille Jean Pierre Manel

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Attachment: Call for Tenders.



Call for Tenders

Biological Studies

Atlantic-wide Research Programme on Bluefin Tuna (ICCAT GBYP – Phase 14)

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) management 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. The resulting biological samples 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.

However, in spite of the huge efforts invested in providing a robust management advice, there are still several uncertainties affecting Atlantic BFT stock assessment. The lack of knowledge on the absolute abundance of the stocks being one of the most important. Since most of the data used for this purpose are fisheries-dependent, it is important to find alternative data sources to verify the basic assumptions made when conducting assessments and MSE.

One methodology that could address this uncertainty is the Genetic Close Kin Mark Recapture (CKMR), approach, which uses the frequency of closely related individuals (e.g. parent-offspring pairs, half-siblings), determined through genetic tagging and analyses, to estimate the spawning stock biomass and exploitation rates, which can be directly used in stock assessments and to reduce the uncertainty in the models used for MSE, or as input to the harvest control rules. Given that this approach requires a well-designed massive sampling of both adults and juveniles, that takes into account what is known about the stocks structure and spatial-temporal distribution, which is very complex in Atlantic BFT, the SCRS is carrying out a broad study to evaluate the financial, logistic and scientific feasibility of implementing a CKMR study for Eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna.

Previous GBYP phases have already supported several activities and pilot studies and the SCRS has considered necessary to inform this feasibility study, such as organization of ad hoc workshops on CKMR, development of an epigenetic clock for Atlantic BFT muscle samples or modelling studies to develop the abundance estimation equations and inform sampling-design decisions. Previous GBYP phases have also contributed to the design of a microarray with genetic markers that have been considered useful for kinship analyses. However, the mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) markers included in the array should be improved to address discrimination between paternal and maternal half-sib pairs. As a first step to identify the mtDNA markers that would be adequate to be integrated into the current array to allow to distinguish between individuals that share the mother or the father, mitochondrial haplotypes frequency need to be estimated.



Within this framework, the priority specific objectives of the Biological Studies in GBYP Phase 14 that are addressed through this Call for Tenders are:

- a) To maintain 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.
- b) To determine the frequency of the different Atlantic bluefin tuna mitochondrial haplotypes, aiming at identifying haplotypes whose low frequency would allow to use them to know if two individuals share the same mother. This is necessary to be able to address larval sibship due to high levels of within-cohort sibship.
- c) To evaluate the sibship among bluefin tuna larvae sampled within the Balearic Sea EU DCF ichthyoplankton survey.

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.

The analyses will mostly follow the [methodologies](#) already established in previous GBYP Biological Studies 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:

Objective a) Maintenance and management of the GBYP tissue bank:

- 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 larval samples that will be analyzed under this Call for Tenders. Management will also include delivery of the necessary samples to the entities in charge of the analyses.

Objective b) To determine the frequency of the different Atlantic bluefin tuna mitochondrial haplotypes:

- Revise all the mitochondrial sequences already published in public databases and those available from whole genome analyses carried out in previous GBYP Phases to determine the number of mitochondrial haplotypes and its composition and frequency.



Objective c) To evaluate the sibship among BFT larvae sampled within the Balearic Sea EU DCF ichthyoplankton survey:

- Identification and sorting following the adequate protocols of at least 3,800 Atlantic bluefin tuna larvae collected in the Balearic Sea, from a pre-defined series of stations selected specifically to address the proposed objective;
- Perform the necessary genetic analyses to determine the sibship among these 3,800 larvae.

Proposals covering one or more points from a) to c) can be submitted; therefore, the Tenderer(s) can optionally apply for all or several tasks or for a specific task. 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.
- 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 Manel](#), with copy to [Ms. Stasa Tensek](#) by **15 August 2024**, including:

- a) The detailed offer covering one or more points from a) to c) 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 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 and tissue bank maintenance. 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 administrative rules specified in the contract.



- i) A declaration that all the comments eventually made on the draft final report (**Deliverable #2**) will be addressed in the final report (**Deliverable #3**) 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 the sampling and analyses activities (for those tasks only) or on the activity to be submitted at the latest by **15 October 2024**, including the description of the work carried out up to that date.

#2 A draft final report to be submitted by **15 December 2024** 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 analysed samples were collected;
 - d) A detailed description of the analyses carried out and of the results achieved (for these tasks only);
 - e) 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);
 - f) An Executive Summary of the final report.
- II. A Power Point presentation of the main results.

#3 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 2024**, 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** and after receiving a regular invoice;
2. 40% upon completion and acceptance of Deliverable #1 and after receiving a regular invoice;
3. 30% after the approval of the final report (**Deliverable #3**) upon incorporation of GBYP comments and approval of the administrative documents and after receiving a regular invoice;

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 (25%); ii) proven track record (20%); iii) technical merit based on work plan (25%); iv) providing in-kind contributions to the budget (20%); and v) 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](#).