

**Report on the First Meeting of the Standing Catch Document Scheme Working Group
(CDS WG)
(Online, 5 February 2026)**

1. Opening of the meeting

This meeting focused exclusively on matters related to the Electronic Bluefin Catch Document (eBCD) system.

2. Nomination of Rapporteur

The Chair asked for a volunteer to act as Rapporteur and the ICCAT Secretariat agreed to take on this responsibility.

3. Adoption of the Agenda

The Chair briefly outlined the agenda and invited CPCs to propose additional items, after which the agenda was adopted (**Appendix 1**).

The List of participants is contained in **Appendix 2**.

4. eBCD system overall state of play

Reference was made to the document “Implementation of the eBCD system – State of play of eBCD project (January 2026).

4.1 Annual report on user support service

Tragsa presented data on eBCD system support activities during 2025, outlining the volume of support emails handled and identifying the main categories of requests, which primarily required action by CPC administrators.

4.2 Review of eBCD system developments/proposals

Tragsa indicated that, in the absence of formally approved new functionalities, development activities were limited to system maintenance, process refinement, stability improvements, and internal testing.

Tragsa then presented the proposals that remained open, outlining their current status and the approach proposed for each:

Transport area within TD section: Tragsa enumerated the fields suggested to be included in this section, namely: departure date; expected arrival date; point of exportation/departure; transport type (air / sea / land / others); transport company; and transport vehicle registration number.

New section “Processing on board”: Tragsa outlined the information and workflow requirements established in document “Requirements for the CDS WG Requests 2026” as follows:

- Creation: A representative of the CPC responsible for the trap, farm, or trade section creates the On-board processing section following a catch, harvest, or eligible trade.
- Notification: The designated processing vessel user receives an automated email notification.
- Data entry: The processing vessel user records the processed products, presentations, and weights.
- Finalization: Upon confirming completion, the section is locked for editing and the CPC/company representatives responsible are notified.

- Trade registration: The trade operator responsible may then proceed with the subsequent trade registration.

Interoperability of the eBCD system with national systems: Tragsa stated that this proposal was technically feasible, but that it required collaboration from the CPCs to determine their specific needs regarding the data to be shared using this technology.

Short-term live storage of bluefin tuna: Tragsa outlined the requirements identified through the pilot project presented by Norway, namely: the creation of a separate operator category for short-term storage farms; the possibility of harvesting directly from transport cages; the assignment of multiple roles to vessels (capture and transport); inspector validation for harvests of up to 1,000 kg per day and 50 t per farm per year, pursuant to paragraph 102 of *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 22-08 establishing a multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean (Rec. 24-05)*; and a dedicated temporary storage option, separate from standard farms, to reduce the use of free-text notes.

Protection of the privacy of authorities in the eBCD system: Tragsa described its proposal for this development, which would involve hiding individual validator names from most users, displaying only the validating authority, restricting full visibility to administrators and validators, and removing validator names from reports.

Modification of a term in the Joint Fishing Operation (JFO) form of the printed eBCD: Tragsa showed an example illustrating how vessel names related to a JFO are currently displayed in printed eBCD documents. According to Tragsa, the example confirmed that the format strictly followed the provisions established in the Recommendation, maintaining the same structure and information fields.

Cross-checks the total catch's average weight and the sampling's average weight (Tagging): Tragsa recalled that *Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 22-16 amending Recommendation 21-18 on the application of the eBCD system (Rec. 24-16)*, in its paragraph 5(d), had been amended with the purpose of avoiding the need to carry out subsequent cross-validations and, therefore, that the continuation of the proposal no longer made sense.

Question from Japan on obtaining the necessary data for the calculation of growth rates: Tragsa reported that the requirements for this new functionality were submitted in May 2023, indicating that the implementation of the new report requested by Japan was feasible. According to Tragsa, this report would provide growth rates for cages by each CPC or for a selected group.

5. Review/progress of eBCD system developments and received cost/time estimate(s)

5.1 Issues with cost estimates available but not requested

5.1.1 Reference 5.5.3: Transport area within TD section to be mandatory and include dates of departure and arrival

The European Union (EU) noted that concerns had been raised by one CPC, in particular Türkiye. It informed the CDS WG that further discussions would be held with the CPC concerned and that any progress would be reported to the CDS WG, noting that proceeding with this development may necessitate an amendment to *Recommendation by ICCAT amending and replacing Recommendation 18-13 on an ICCAT bluefin tuna catch documentation programme (Rec. 23-21)* to include additional mandatory fields.

Final decision: Open. The CDS WG will await the outcome of further bilateral discussions between the EU and Türkiye before proceeding.

5.1.2 Reference 3.1: Initial discussion of reflecting "processing on board" in the eBCD system

The CDS WG supported proceeding with this section, based on TRAGSA's time/cost estimation, included as **Appendix 3** [sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3].

Final decision: Approved for development.

5.2 List of issues considered “open” but no decision taken

5.2.1 Reference 8.2.2: Protect the privacy of authorities in the eBCDs through creation of a registry of validators in the eBCD system

The EU suggested that the solution presented by Tragsa may be overly complex and proposed replacing validator names with a numerical identifier as a simpler alternative. It also noted that, in some EU Member States, this approach is already used to comply with legal privacy requirements, potentially avoiding the need for additional system changes.

Tragsa clarified that its proposal was limited to replacing the validator’s name with the name of the validating entity. It explained that the alternative suggested by the EU would require the creation of a registry of validators and the assignment of unique identifiers, resulting in a more extensive system development, as no such registry currently exists in the eBCD.

Following this explanation, the EU concurred that Tragsa should further investigate the feasibility and implications of the numerical identifier approach.

The Chair summarised that TRAGSA would further assess the EU’s proposal and report back with additional analysis, including cost implications, as no cost estimate was available at this stage.

Final decision: Cost/time analysis to be requested.

5.2.2 Cross-checks the total catch’s average weight and the sampling’s average weight-4. Tagging

The United States referred to the CDS WG’s earlier support for collecting and cross-checking this information. It stated that recent amendments to [Rec. 24-16](#) might suffice, while noting that bilateral consultations with Tragsa have not yet taken place. The United States expressed its readiness to consult with Tragsa and the EU ahead of the September meeting to assess whether additional system adjustments are required in the system.

The Chair summarized that consultations would proceed and, given the increased clarity of [Rec. 24-16](#), no further discussion or system development was deemed necessary at this stage.

Final decision: Open, pending the outcome of the forthcoming consultations.

5.2.3 Reference 2.4.2: Modification of a term in the JFO form of the printed BCD

The United States clarified that only minor textual amendments were envisaged for both the printed BCD and the online eBCD to ensure consistent wording to reflect the actual flag that makes catches in JFOs. It explained that the discrepancy concerned the printed BCD and the online capture information section, rather than a discrepancy between the printed BCD and the language in [Rec. 23-21](#) itself. The United States confirmed that it would continue bilateral consultations with Tragsa to resolve the matter, stressing that the proposed changes were purely textual and would not require operational system modifications, allowing for a straightforward correction once development resumed.

The Chair noted that, although not previously a priority, a simple and cost-neutral solution would be welcome, and the matter was set aside pending further discussions with Tragsa and the relevant CPC.

Final decision: Open.

5.2.4 Question from Japan on obtaining the necessary data for the calculation of growth rates

Japan expressed interest in the issue of growth tables and how this was correctly incorporated into eBCD functionality. It underlined that integrating this information into the eBCD system could help identify potential non-compliance and improve the efficiency of import inspections. Japan requested that the issue remains open and continues to be considered both by the CDS WG and during the upcoming Intersessional Meeting of Panel 2.

The Chair concluded that the issue would remain open for further discussion at upcoming intersessional meetings.

Final decision: Open pending discussions of Panel 2.

5.2.5 Cases where an intermediate trading company (separate from the receiving farm associated company) needed to trade live fish from the fishers (sellers) to the receiving farm (buyer)

The EU summarized issues identified in the document “Issue on the eBCD system export and re-export operations” related to certain trade flows involving intermediaries, where transactions were incorrectly recorded in the eBCD system as imports into the EU despite the fish never entering EU territory. To illustrate this, the EU presented a specific example involving a trade operation from a farm in Morocco to Japan via a Spanish intermediary company; although the product was transported directly to Japan, the system treated the transaction as an import into the EU.

It highlighted two main problems: first, a potential inconsistency with [Rec. 23-21](#) regarding the definition of imports; and second, validation requirements that obliged an EU Member State to validate operations in which it had no jurisdiction (e.g. requiring Spanish validation for fish that never entered its territory). The EU called for a technical solution to address these cases and invited Tragsa to indicate whether a simple technical fix might be feasible to resolve the issue.

Tragsa explained the current validation workflow of the eBCD system. For trade operations, the country/CPC of the exporter or seller is responsible for the trade section, which must be validated by an inspector from a validating entity in that CPC. The Point of Exportation/Departure is recorded as a free-text field for additional information, while the State of Destination selected in the system determines the country of the importing companies.

For re-export operations, the country/CPC selected in the corresponding section is responsible for the re-export. The re-exporting company must belong to that CPC, and validation is carried out by an inspector from a validating entity in the same country. The Point of Re-export is also recorded as a free-text field.

Tragsa observed that this structure reflects the current system design and that introducing a different approach would require significant changes to the existing architecture. Nevertheless, it remained open to considering alternative proposals from CPCs and then to make the necessary development in the system.

The EU indicated that it had no technical solution at this stage but would consult its Member States and revert with any proposals, informing the CDS WG at the next meeting.

Final decision: Open.

5.2.6 eBCD data integration: next steps toward interoperability

The Chair recalled previous discussions on the interoperability of the eBCD system with CPCs’ national systems and reiterated the importance of developing appropriate interfaces when needed. As such interfaces have not yet been developed and would likely entail additional costs, he proposed deferring further consideration of the matter to a later stage and based on specific requests from CPCs.

Final decision: Open.

5.2.7. Discussion paper on the application of electronic Bluefin Catch Document (eBCD) in the Pilot project for the short-term live storage of bluefin tuna (Norway)

Norway outlined the fact that several system modifications had been proposed in 2023, with additional options presented in 2025, but that the CDS WG had considered their introduction into the system itself as premature given it remained as a pilot project. It noted that the Commission is currently assessing the continuation of the activity beyond the pilot phase, with a decision expected by 2027. Norway therefore indicated that no further changes would be pursued at this stage, that the current system would continue to be used as agreed, and that its proposals could be revisited when appropriate.

The Chair reaffirmed that any system changes would depend on any further decision on the pilot project and confirmed that existing interim arrangements on the use of the eBCD system by Norway for their pilot project would remain in place until then.

Final decision: Open.

6. Consideration of new eBCD issues and/or possible future development

6.1 Recording of “Other” product presentations in the printed eBCD trade section

Tragsa recalled that, following previous system updates, both the eBCD and the printed BCD were modified to allow the recording of specific product presentations previously grouped under “Other”, introducing dedicated subcategories, corresponding weight fields, and blank spaces to accommodate potential future presentations. Specifically, Tragsa explained that the generic “OT” (Other) field is maintained in the system but is intended to remain at zero, reserved solely for potential future subproducts not currently listed.

In this context, Japan recently reported a case where quantities were declared under the generic “Other” category without a defined subtype. As a result, these amounts were reflected only in the total weight and not in any specific presentation field. Japan therefore requested that such quantities also be displayed in the relevant section of the printed document for greater clarity and import cross-checking.

Tragsa indicated that the feature is not currently supported and recommended considering a temporary printed-format adjustment.

Japan noted that the inconsistency between the printed and on-screen versions created difficulties and urged that it be addressed.

Tragsa indicated that the adjustment could be implemented within the maintenance budget and was not expected to require significant development effort.

Japan supported addressing the issue under maintenance but highlighted the urgent commercial impact, noting that current inconsistencies are affecting live business transactions.

The Chair noted the agreement to proceed on this basis and proceeding with Tragsa’s proposal with no additional costs foreseen, and Japan expressed its support.

Final decision: Approved for development under the maintenance budget.

6.2 EMS / Regional Observer Replacement – Implications for eBCD validation

The EU introduced a point from “Issue on the eBCD system export and re-export operations” concerning the potential use of Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS) on processing vessels. As the current process requires validation by a regional observer, the replacement of observers by EMS would make such signatures no longer possible. While no decision has yet been taken on the use of EMS on processing vessels, the EU suggested that this aspect may need to be considered in future eBCD system developments. Given the ongoing discussions, it considered it premature to request a cost estimate at this stage and proposed keeping the matter under review pending further progress, with updates to be provided at a future CDS WG meeting.

Japan observed that the use of EMS on processing vessels is still under discussion within the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM) and the Permanent Working Group for the Improvement of ICCAT Statistics and Conservation Measures (PWG). Nevertheless, it expressed interest in continuing to examine the issue. Japan suggested that the practical implications, including possible enforcement measures such as the suspension of imports in cases of non-compliance, should be further assessed in future discussions at the IMM level.

The Chair noted that this issue is deferred for consideration within the IMM.

Final decision: Open, deferred to IMM.

7. Update on Call for tenders to commission a feasibility study on the technological migration of the eBCD system and options for multi-species extension

The Secretariat recalled that the current eBCD system requires a technological migration, as the existing development environment will soon become obsolete and unsupported, creating potential security, maintenance, and operational risks. At the same time, the Commission is assessing whether any potential future expansion of ICCATs catch document schemes to other species be integrated into a single unified application or developed as separate systems.

To address these issues, the Commission mandated the Secretariat to prepare Terms of Reference and launch a feasibility study covering both the migration and the most suitable architectural approach. The Secretariat informed that a Call for tenders for a feasibility study on technological migration of the eBCD system and options for multi-species extension was disseminated in late December 2025, proposals were received and evaluated, one provider was preselected, and preliminary results are expected by September 2026, with a final report to inform subsequent implementation decisions.

Regarding budgetary aspects, the Secretariat reported that, after covering existing maintenance and operational costs, approximately EUR 150,000 remains available in the eBCD budget. However, the selected feasibility study proposal amounts to EUR 170,000, resulting in a shortfall of EUR 20,000. In addition, recently agreed developments related to processing vessels are estimated at approximately EUR 25,000, which may further reduce available funds for the study.

The STACFAD Chair questioned whether sufficient funds remained to cover the feasibility study, noting that around EUR 400,000 had been allocated to the eBCD and just over EUR 200,000 had been spent to date.

The Secretariat reported that the updated balance of the eBCD operations fund as of 31 December 2025 is approximately EUR 260,000. However, due to ongoing operational costs linked to the current service providers and the continued testing of an alternative supplier to reduce costs in the long term, additional expenses not initially foreseen for 2026 are expected. In a conservative scenario, should the transition to the new provider not be completed and services continue with the existing consortium for the full year, the available balance would therefore be reduced to approximately EUR 150,000.

The Chair observed that the financial figures were estimates and that the budget required further clarification. From a technical perspective he therefore proposed granting provisional approval to proceed with the company selected by the Secretariat for the feasibility study while continuing to review funding options and address any potential shortfall including in consultation with the Standing Committee on Finance and Administration (STACFAD) and the ICCAT Secretariat.

The ICCAT Executive Secretary assured that the Secretariat would explore funding options, including with the STACFAD Chair, to cover the remaining budget gap and proceed with the work.

The EU indicated its technical agreement to proceed with the selected company, subject to the availability of sufficient funds. It suggested that the Secretariat, in consultation with the STACFAD Chair, explore whether the scope of the feasibility study and its Terms of Reference could be adjusted to reduce costs and fit within the available budget, thereby avoiding the need for additional funding.

Japan supported the EU's position but explicitly distinguished between the two components of the study. It noted that while the technological migration relates to the eBCD budget, the expansion to other species falls outside the current system's scope and was needed for the implementation of the agreed Workplan of the CDS WG and its meeting foreseen in September. Therefore, Japan advocated for the use of the Commission's Working Capital Fund to finance the expansion component thereby alleviating the deficit in the eBCD fund.

The ICCAT Executive Secretary indicated that the Secretariat would further explore the options raised by the EU and Japan, including reviewing the Terms of reference to identify any cost reduction, if possible, and also assessing whether additional funding could be mobilized from the Working Capital Fund.

8. Next steps and future intersessional work

The next meeting, scheduled for September 2026, will address both the eBCD and the possible expansion of the CDS, taking into account the results of the feasibility study. In the meantime, outstanding technical matters will be addressed by correspondence, and the meeting report will be submitted to the IMM meeting in June 2026. The Secretariat will keep CPCs informed of any financial or technical developments.

9. Other matters

No other matters were raised.

10. Adoption of the report and adjournment

It was decided that the report would be adopted by correspondence.

Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting and meeting arrangements
2. Nomination of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. eBCD system overall state of play
5. Review/progress of eBCD system developments and received cost/time estimate(s)
6. Consideration of new eBCD issues and/or possible future development:
 - a) stemming from Recommendations
 - b) from CPCs
7. Update on Call for tenders to commission a feasibility study on the technological migration of the eBCD system and options for multi-species extension
8. Next steps and future intersessional work
9. Other matters
10. Adoption of the report and adjournment

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**Cost estimation (creation of a new On-board Processing section) and
cost estimate (On-Board Processing section in eBCD Reports)**
[sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3]

2.1.2 Cost estimation (Creation of a new On-board Processing section)

1.2 REFERENCE 6.: INITIAL DISCUSSION ON THE REFLECTION ON "ON-BOARD PROCESSING" IN THE EBCD SYSTEM. (REF. TO THE REPORT/ SECTION 6. OF THE 2ND "TWG EBCD" - INTERSESSIONAL MEETING OF JUNE 5, 2023).			
Profile	Total hours	Cost	Specifications
Consultant	10,00	€58.96	€589.60
Project Manager	40,00	€52.78	€2,111.20
Business Analyst	120,00	€44.05	€5,286.00
Programmer Analyst	240,00	€41.72	€10,012.80
Business Expert	112,5	€38.66	4.349,25
1.2 REFERENCE 6.: INITIAL DISCUSSION ON THE REFLECTION ON "ON-BOARD PROCESSING" IN THE EBCD SYSTEM. (REF. TO THE REPORT/ SECTION 6. OF THE 2ND "TWG EBCD" - INTERSESSIONAL MEETING OF JUNE 5, 2023).			€22,349.25

2.1.3 Cost estimate (On-board Processing section in eBCD Reports)

Information related to the new On-Board Processing section may be included in reports generated by the eBCD system.

We have considered the option of including information regarding the on-board transformation in the reports, but a separate cost assessment will be provided for the creation of the On-Board Processing section in the event that the group deems it unnecessary to include this information in the reports.

The report in which the information on on-board processing could appear would be flag's raw data. This report collects information specific to the country that generates the report (in this case, the country of the selling company).

The on-board processing information would be included in a new tab added to the Excel template of this report. In addition, it should be noted that this data must be downloaded from the database and subsequently transferred to the report template.

On the new Onboard Processing tab of the flag's raw data report, the information included would be this:

- BCD code of the on-board processing
- Date of Processing
- BCD code from the previous section
- Previous section type
- Processing vessel
 - Name
 - ICCAT Number
 - National Registration Number
 - Flag
- Starting Gross Weight
- Type of product processed
- Presentation of processed products
- Weight (kg)
- Comments

On-board processing report			
Profile	Total hours	Cost	Specifications
Consultant	2	€58.96	€117.92
Project Manager	5	€52.78	€263.90
Business Analyst	10	€44.05	€440.50
Programmer Analyst	30	€41.72	€1,251.60
Business Expert	20	€38.66	€773.20
<i>ON-BOARD PROCESSING REPORT</i>			€2,847.12