

RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT ON AQUACULTURE BLUEFIN TUNA

RECOGNIZING that ICCAT has established a comprehensive Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS) for Atlantic bluefin tuna, firstly adopted in 2007, with the main aim to have effective control of the movement of bluefin tuna, strict tracking of the product from the point of capture throughout the whole operation to its final market;

ACKNOWLEDGING the critical role of the electronic Bluefin Tuna Catch Documentation (eBCD) system in combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and the significant influence that market dynamics exert on the fishery; includes the necessity for complementary market-related measures that have contributed to the recovery of these stocks from overfishing status;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the rebuilding plan for western Atlantic bluefin tuna and the recovery plan for eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna adopted by ICCAT in 2008, which results have now come into fruition after the recovery of the stocks and the adoption leading ICCAT to transition to a bluefin tuna Management Plan, which however requires the maintaining the same level of control on all the components involved in the bluefin tuna fisheries;

MINDFUL of the rights and obligations of port States to promote the effectiveness of management measures adopted by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs);

UNDERLINING the need to establish measures that safeguard the wild bluefin tuna market by preventing loopholes in the eBCD, maintain high standards in the fight against IUU fishing, and ensure that all wild fish can be clearly distinguished from aquaculture fish;

NOTING that during the 23rd Special Meeting of 2022, the Commission was informed of several CPCs' plans to develop bluefin tuna aquaculture, either through the importation of wild bluefin tuna eggs or through full aquaculture cycles using broodstock, with this fish potentially entering the commercial market as early as 2025;

CONSIDERING the current lack of information in the eBCD system regarding the origin of fish, whether wild-caught or from aquaculture;

FURTHER CONSIDERING the potential impact of escapements of aquaculture bluefin tuna on wild stocks;

BEARING IN MIND the discussions held in ICCAT Panel 2 and the technical deliberations by the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM) in June 2023;

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. For the purposes of this Recommendation, "aquaculture" is defined as any bluefin tuna rearing activity, either through the hatching of wild bluefin tuna eggs or through full aquaculture cycles using broodstock within a controlled system, excluding short-term live storage, farming and fattening activities as defined by *Resolution by ICCAT on a pilot project for the short-term live storage of bluefin tuna* (Res. 22-07) and *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).

2. Any CPC seeking to export bluefin tuna produced through aquaculture shall establish a system to distinguish between wild-caught fish including those that have been subject to short-term live storage, farming and fattening, and aquacultured fish. This system shall be detailed in an Aquaculture plan to be submitted annually to Panel 2 for its review and endorsement, as part of the reporting obligation on fishing, farming, inspection and capacity management plans for eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean BFT, including details on the controllability of such system. A CPC that does not submit a fishing, farming, inspection and capacity management plan in accordance with Recommendation 24-05 but wishes to conduct aquaculture operations for bluefin tuna, shall nonetheless submit an Aquaculture plan.
3. The Aquaculture plan stipulated in paragraph 2 above shall, in particular, include the following information:
 - i. The origin of the bluefin tuna (hatching of wild bluefin tuna eggs or complete aquaculture cycle using broodstock);
 - ii. Details on any aquaculture facilities established within waters under a CPC's jurisdiction, including the number of structures at sea and the annual farming capacity;
 - iii. The forecasts for the quantities of aquaculture bluefin tuna to be marketed for the reporting year.
 - iv. The expected number and volume of fish to be produced, expected size of fish at time of harvest, and the anticipated harvest date. The measures taken to prevent caged fish from escaping and information on any environmental impact assessment that has been carried out.
4. Bluefin tuna produced through aquaculture shall be accompanied by an eBCD, in accordance with the *Recommendation by ICCAT amending and replacing Recommendation 18-13 on an ICCAT Bluefin Tuna Catch Documentation programme* (Rec. 23-21) and the *Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 22-16 amending Recommendation 21-18 on the application of the eBCD system* (Rec. 24-16). CPCs shall prohibit bluefin tuna aquaculture operators from selling or offering for sale aquacultured fish until the eBCD system has a functionality to register the fish's origin.
5. The eBCD that accompanies each bluefin tuna produced through aquaculture shall clearly identify the origin of the fish as an aquaculture product and specify the aquaculture facility involved. To facilitate this, the eBCD system rules shall be adjusted to allow the system to register the fish's origin, whether from an aquaculture facility or, if wild, from a trap or fishing vessel.
6. CPCs carrying out aquaculture activities shall endeavour to implement strict measures to ensure separation of wild and farmed bluefin tuna populations, including maintaining genetic monitoring, controlled broodstock selection, regulated hatchery practices, and enforced protocols to prevent genetic mixing.
7. The Standing Catch Document Scheme Working Group (CDS WG) shall endeavour to propose the necessary revisions to Recommendations 24-16 and 23-21 to incorporate the requirements of paragraphs 4 and 5 for the Commission's consideration in 2025.
8. At its meeting in 2027 the Commission shall review the implementation of this Recommendation and consider asking the SCRS to assess the potential impacts of bluefin tuna aquaculture undertaken under this Recommendation on the genetics of the wild stock and on the ecosystem.
9. ICCAT Panel 2 shall endeavour to propose to the ICCAT Commission the necessary amendments to Recommendation 24-05 to cater for the inclusion of an Aquaculture plan into the annual bluefin tuna plan.
10. Relevant provisions of Recommendation 24-05, notably paragraph 10 shall apply to aquaculture activity of bluefin tuna carried out in the ICCAT Convention area.