9.6 BFT - Atlantic bluefin tuna

In 2022, the ICCAT Commission adopted a Management Procedure (MP) for both the western Atlantic and eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean management areas (Rec. 22-09). The adoption of the MP represents a foundational change in how bluefin tuna (BFT) will be managed. This approach links eastern and western area Total Allowable Catch (TACs) under one management framework, providing joint management advice, and requires the Executive Summaries for the East and West BFT (BFT-E and BFT-W) to have common or closely related sections. The MP frees the assessment process from having to provide annual TAC advice and allows the stock assessment process to return to its traditional strengths which are to provide a determination of relative stock status. According to the adopted MP, stock assessments will continue to be conducted but on a more reduced frequency. The next assessment will be held in 2026 or 2027, pending further dialogue between the Committee and the Commission.

Until such time as a new assessment occurs, the Committee retains the stock status determination from the most recent assessments: West (ICCAT, 2021d) and East Atlantic and Mediterranean (ICCAT, 2022d). Previous stock assessments utilized $F_{0.1}$ as a reasonable proxy for F_{MSY} as fishing at $F_{0.1}$ would, over the longer term, allow the resource to fluctuate around the true, but unknown, value of $B_{0.1}$ regardless of the future recruitment level. The $F_{0.1}$ strategy compensates for the effect of recruitment changes on biomass by allowing higher catches when recent recruitment is higher and reducing catches when recent recruitments are lower. Given that it remains unknown whether future stock assessments will be able to estimate a stock-specific F_{MSY}, $F_{0.1}$ remains a useful proxy to evaluate overfishing status. The Committee notes that $F_{0.1}$ was not used to evaluate status within the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) as the true F_{MSY} was known within each of the operating models.

For many years, the Committee has been concerned that environmental factors and changing fishing practices may affect many of the relative abundance indices used in the MP leading to exceptional circumstances (EC) and challenges to assess stock status. Furthermore, there still remains a key source of uncertainty in the scale of the total population size. The Committee has provided "Eastern Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Close-Kin Mark Recapture (CKMR) Implementation Plan Proposal" and the "Bluefin tuna workplan for 2025" to address these concerns.

Annually, the Committee evaluates the updated indices of abundance for determination of EC. Based upon the current EC protocols (Rec. 23-07), the Committee provides details and results of such determination in section 19.12.

BFT-1. Biology

Atlantic bluefin tuna have a wide geographical distribution but live mainly in the temperate pelagic ecosystem of the entire North Atlantic and its adjacent waters, for example the Gulf of Mexico, Gulf of St Lawrence and the Mediterranean Sea. Historical catch information documents the presence in the South Atlantic (**BFT-Figure 1**). Electronic archival tagging information has confirmed that bluefin tuna can tolerate cold as well as warm water temperatures while maintaining a stable internal body temperature. Bluefin tuna preferentially occupy the surface and subsurface waters of the coastal and open-sea areas, but archival electronic tagging and ultrasonic telemetry data indicate that they frequently dive to depths of more than 1,000 m. Bluefin tuna are a highly migratory species that seems to display a homing behaviour and spawning site fidelity to primary spawning areas in both the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. Evidence indicates spawning in other areas, for example the vicinity of the Slope Sea off the Northeast USA and more recently the Cantabrian Sea, though the persistence and importance of these other areas as spawning grounds remain to be determined. Electronic tagging is also resolving the movements to the foraging areas within the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic and indicates that bluefin tuna movement patterns vary by tagging site, by month of tagging and according to the age of the fish. The reappearance of bluefin tuna in historical fishing areas (e.g. Norway and, more recently, the Black Sea) suggest that important changes in the spatial dynamics of bluefin tuna may also have resulted from interactions between biological factors, environmental variations and a reduction in fishing effort.

The fisheries for Atlantic bluefin tuna were managed as two separate management units, but now are managed with an MP that explicitly considers the mixing of the two biological populations. However, TAC advice remains area specific with separation at the 45 W meridian.

The ICCAT Atlantic-Wide Bluefin Tuna Research Programme (GBYP), as well as national research programmes, have provided the basis for improved biological studies. A genotyping assay has been developed and tested for stock identification, sex determination and kinship analysis. A pilot study on epigenetic aging indicates the viability of this approach for both eastern and western BFT. Modelling has been carried out to assess the feasibility of implementing the close-kin mark-recapture methodology for BFT-E. Within the GBYP, the aerial survey in the Mediterranean has continued, as well efforts to increase and improve the information available on the spatial distribution and mixing of the BFT and to promote and support electronic tagging campaigns. Substantial progress has been made in estimating regional, time varying mixing rates for Atlantic bluefin tuna, using otolith stable isotope and genetic analyses. Research on the larval ecology of Atlantic bluefin tuna has advanced in recent years through oceanographic habitat suitability models.

Currently, the Committee assumes for assessment purposes that eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna contributes fully to spawning at age 5. There are also indications that some young individuals (of age 5) of unknown origin caught in the West Atlantic are mature, but there is considerable uncertainty with regards to their contribution to the western stock spawning. Therefore, the Committee has considered two spawning schedules for the western stock; one identical to that used for the East and one with peak spawning at age 13. However, the latest review of reproductive biology has shown that both the current vectors for spawning fraction at-age might be biased, and that the magnitude of that bias is unknown. Juvenile growth is rapid for a teleost fish, but slower than for other tuna and billfish species. Fish born in June attain a length of about 30-40 cm and a weight of about 1 kg by October. After one year, fish reach about 4 kg and 60 cm in length. At 10 years of age, a bluefin tuna is about 200 cm and 170 kg and reaches about 270 cm and 400 kg at 20 years of age. Bluefin tuna is a long-living species, with a lifespan of about 40 years as indicated by radiocarbon deposition and can reach 330 cm straight fork length (SFL) and weigh up to 725 kg. In 2017, the Committee revised the natural mortality assumptions and adopted a single new age specific natural mortality vector for both stocks.

Important electronic and conventional tagging activity has been conducted for both juvenile and adult fish for several years in the Atlantic and Mediterranean by the ICCAT GBYP, National Programmes and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Contributions from e-tag data from all groups are supporting ongoing efforts to provide important insights into bluefin tuna stock structure, distribution, mixing and migrations, and are helping to estimate fishing mortality rates and to condition the MSE operating models. Three workshops organized by the GBYP on larval indices, close-kin mark-recapture and electronic tagging were held in 2023. In these workshops there has been a large participation and contributions that have allowed progress and planning in the three research areas.

East bluefin tuna

BFT-E-2. Fishery trends and indicators – East Atlantic and Mediterranean

Reported catches in the East Atlantic and Mediterranean (**BFT-Figure 1**) reached a peak of over 50,000 t in 1996 and then decreased substantially, stabilizing at around the TAC levels established by ICCAT for the most recent period (**BFT-E-Figure 1**). Catches between 2019 and 2023 (as of September 2024) were respectively 31,136 t, 35,048 t, 35,097 t, 35,110 t and 39,247 t for the East Atlantic and Mediterranean, of which 22,092 t, 24,174 t, 24,789 t, 24,632 t and 28,250 t were reported for the Mediterranean for those same years (**BFT-Table 1**). The Committee is aware of ongoing, unquantified, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) catches that represents a serious impediment to being able to determine the productivity of the stock and to provide reliable TAC advice. In response, the Committee urges identification and quantification of IUU catches so that it can provide more accurate biomass-based catch advice and obtain more accurate scientific understanding of stock productivity.

Available information has demonstrated that catches of bluefin tuna from the East Atlantic and Mediterranean were seriously under-reported between the mid-1990s through 2007. The Committee estimated that the realized total catch during this period was likely of the order of 50,000 t to 61,000 t per year, based on the number of vessels operating in the Mediterranean Sea and their respective catch rates. Since the 2017 Bluefin Tuna Stock Assessment (ICCAT, 2018a), these estimates (1998-2007) have been treated as the actual catches.

During the 2022 Stock Assessment Meeting (ICCAT, 2022d), the decision was made to use ten abundance indices up to 2020 (seven CPUE series and three fisheries independent indices, **BFT-E-Figure 2**). The current MP uses five indices in each management area (in the East, two CPUE indices and three surveys, **BFT-Figure 2**).

Review of the indices for ECs is based on the combined index, however it is informative to evaluate trends in individual indices relative to those predicted by the operating models in the MSE (**BFT Figures 2 and 3**). The data for the West Mediterranean Larval survey have been collected but the index was not able to be updated at the time of publication. The Moroccan-Portugal trap index data point for 2023 reflected substantial changes in the fishing operations hence the index data point for this year is considered unavailable under the EC protocols (Rec. 23-07).

BFT-E-3. State of the stock

There have been considerable improvements in data quality and quantity over the past few years; nevertheless, important gaps remain in the temporal and spatial coverage for detailed size and catch-effort statistics for several fisheries, especially in the Mediterranean before the implementation of stereo video cameras in 2014. The catch at size (CAS) and catch-at-age (CAA) of the not elsewhere included (NEI) catch (1998-2007) were revised.

Three modelling platforms were used to conduct the assessment of the BFT-E in 2022. As in previous assessments, a virtual population analysis (VPA) was conducted, and two additional platforms, Stock Synthesis (SS) and the age-structured assessment programme (ASAP), were applied.

The three models showed similar trends in spawning stock biomass (SSB), with a progressive decline in SSB from the 1970s until the implementation of a Recovery Plan developed in 2006 (Rec. 06-05). Since the late 2000s there has been a strong increase in SSB, although the magnitude and rate of increase differ among the three models, with VPA indicating the lowest biomass while ASAP indicates the largest increase. Uncertainty in the rate and magnitude of the increase in SSB is evident for all three platforms and in the sensitivity tests conducted for each platform, especially in recent years (**BFT-E-Figure 3**). The fishing mortality of the age group 2-5 and age 10+ fish showed an increasing trend since the 1970s, whereas the F for both the age group 2-5 and age 10+ shows a drastic decline in fishing mortality since the establishment of the 2006 Recovery Plan (**BFT-E-Figure 3**). Recently, fishing mortality has been increasing, however, when average over all three models, fishing mortality is still below fishing mortality target.

Recruitments estimated by the three assessment platforms show considerable variability, especially over the recent period. In general, however, there are two distinct periods, one with low recruitments before 1990 and the other with higher recruitments thereafter (**BFT-E-Figure 3**).

The current perception of the stock status depends on recruitment estimates which are highly uncertain. The different models showed a relatively wide range of stock status estimates relative to the $F_{0.1}$ reference level, ranging from overfishing to not overfishing ($F_{CURRENT}/F_{0.1}$): VPA = 1.16; SS = 0.72 and ASAP = 0.54. To inform stock status, the Committee recommended that the results of the three models be considered equally, by integrating the results. The resultant point estimate of F_{CUR} is below $F_{0.1}$ ($F_{CURRENT}/F_{0.1}$= 0.81; 95% CI 0.48-1.62), indicating a stock status determination of not overfishing. Furthermore, fishing mortality rates are much lower than those during the 1998-2007 period.

BFT-E-4. Outlook

The Committee considers that the three assessment platforms (VPA, SS and ASAP) have disparate and highly uncertain estimates of recent recruitment and absolute biomass, which would make short-term catch advice based on $F_{0.1}$ not robust in terms of both the consequences of taking a particular TAC and the accuracy of absolute $F_{0.1}$ estimate.

The adopted management procedure accounts for many of the long-standing uncertainties regarding stock mixing, biomass-based reference points and recruitment that created uncertainty for the outlook for the stock. Furthermore, the Committee is no longer providing projections, TAC advice or Kobe 2 strategy matrices derived from the stock assessments using an $F_{0.1}$ strategy, as the MP provides TAC advice that was simulation tested to achieve MSY-based management objectives.

BFT-E-5. Effect of current regulations

The TAC for 2023 to 2025 is set at 40,570 t. The Committee noted that reported catches in 2023 are in line with the TACs. However, the Committee has been previously informed of the existence of unquantified illegal catches.

BFT-E-6. Management recommendations

The management plan established in Rec. 22-08 and based on the MP for BFT sets a TAC for BFT-E of 40,570 t for 2023 to 2025.

According to the EC protocol in Rec. 23-07 and noted in section 19.12 no EC exists that would warrant deviating from the TAC calculated under the MP for 2025.

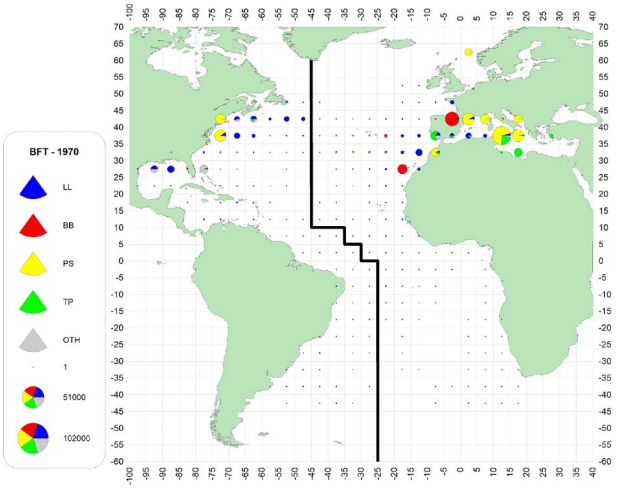
EAST ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN BLUEFIN TUNA SUMMARY	
Current reported catch (2023)	39,247 t*
$F_{CURRENT}/F_{0.1}$[1] (2020)	0.81 (0.48-1.62)[2]
Stock Status (2020)[3]	Overfishing: No
TAC 2023-2025	40,570 t

[1] $F_{CURRENT}$ refers to the geometric mean of the estimates (a proxy for recent F levels) for 2017-2020 for VPA, and for 2018-2020 for ASAP and SS. For the VPA and ASAP, F is measured as apical F, for SS F is exploitation rate in biomass.
[2] Mean and approximate 95% CI from integrating across the uncertainty for each model.
[3] Biomass reference points to determine stock status were not estimated since the 2017 assessment due to uncertainty in recruitment potential.
* As of September 2024.

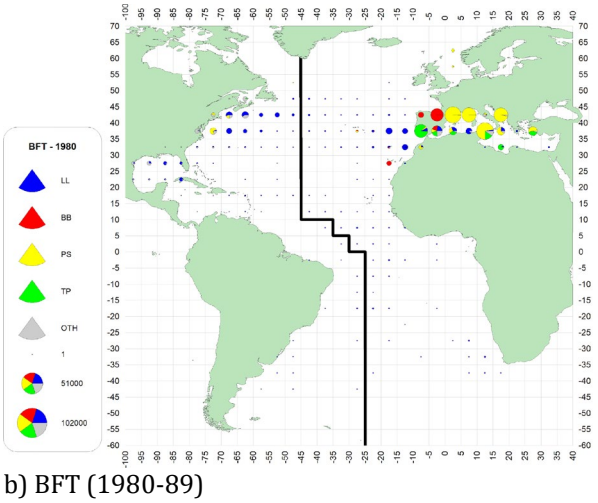
BFT-Table 1. Estimated catches (t) of northern bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) by area, gear, and flag.

					1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
TOTAL					48881	49751	54009	53946	53658	52772	52755	52785	53319	52306	52125	51757	51813	62639	36463	21799	13197	11782	12689	14726	14889	18057	21314	25517	29853	33442	37255	37407	37809	41814
	ATE				7054	9780	12088	16379	11630	10247	10061	10086	10347	7294	7402	9023	7529	8441	8243	6685	4379	3984	3834	4163	3918	4841	5968	7216	8157	9044	10674	10308	10477	10998
	MED				39715	37523	39299	34832	38371	39754	39940	39914	39654	42906	42399	40977	42473	52960	16220	13135	6961	5791	7101	9082	9344	11374	13445	16451	19626	22092	24174	24789	24632	28250
	ATW				2113	2448	2512	2334	2657	2772	2775	2784	3319	2305	2125	1756	1811	1638	2000	1980	1857	2007	1754	1482	1627	1842	1901	1830	2069	2306	2208	2310	2700	2566
Landings	ATE		Bait boat		2284	3093	5369	7215	3139	1554	2032	2426	2635	1409	1902	2282	1263	2436	2393	1260	725	636	283	243	95	172	1085	1195	692	845	936	1031	1026	1036
			Longline		2311	4522	4212	4057	3789	3570	3736	3303	2896	2748	2064	2700	2033	1705	2491	1951	1194	1125	1139	1167	1194	1467	1829	2208	2730	3128	3313	3049	3294	3633
			Other surf.		590	555	273	60	387	404	309	558	631	521	290	424	831	302	181	297	124	35	49	141	210	193	261	295	340	320	381	359	368	434
			Purse seine		213	458	323	828	700	726	661	153	887	490	1078	1197	408	0	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	42	49	11	56	190	147	107	111
			Sport (HL+RR)		25	0	0	237	28	33	126	61	63	109	89	11	99	11	12	11	44	51	53	46	43	104	35	101	118	92	156	267	245	237
			Traps		1630	1152	1921	3982	3586	3960	2996	3585	3235	2116	1978	2408	2895	3788	3166	3164	2292	2137	2311	2564	2376	2905	2716	3362	4258	4394	5889	5255	5434	5541
	MED		Bait boat		0	206	5	4	11	4	38	28	1	9	17	5	0	0	0	38	1	0	2	2	9	25	0	50	56	72	103	81	88	117
			Longline		6993	8469	9856	7313	4117	3338	3424	4144	3234	3484	3036	3427	3408	3269	2376	1344	1242	962	587	605	588	776	1523	1184	1318	1485	1889	1657	1785	2030
			Other surf.		776	545	418	283	284	229	729	354	340	198	197	175	83	86	3	2	3	2	2	21	31	5	38	3	36	33	42	68	61	76
			Purse seine		27948	23799	26021	24279	31792	33799	33237	33043	34044	37291	37869	36639	38363	48994	13540	11448	4986	4293	6172	7982	8184	9993	11340	14493	17128	19515	20872	21987	21596	24659
			Sport (HL+RR)		2307	3562	2149	2340	1092	1533	1773	1167	1520	1404	1325	619	494	117	149	160	448	356	202	240	289	373	308	440	582	611	865	740	717	875
			Traps		1691	942	951	613	1074	852	799	1177	515	221	154	112	125	93	152	144	281	165	125	222	232	192	227	272	300	353	399	252	384	407
	ATW		Longline		539	491	545	382	564	915	838	610	729	186	644	425	565	420	606	366	529	743	478	470	498	553	562	539	706	675	576	653	913	889
			Other surf.		307	384	429	293	342	279	283	201	107	139	97	89	85	63	78	121	107	147	117	121	119	138	93	123	77	168	134	175	209	190
			Purse seine		301	249	245	250	249	248	275	196	208	265	32	178	4	28	0	11	0	0	2	29	38	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
			Sport (HL+RR)		804	1114	1032	1181	1108	1125	1121	1650	2036	1399	1139	924	1005	1023	1134	1251	1009	888	917	692	810	1085	1204	1144	1263	1450	1482	1444	1521	1461
			Traps		79	72	90	59	68	44	16	16	28	84	32	8	3	4	23	23	39	26	17	11	20	6	10	13	3	4	4	4	0	0
Discards	ATE		Longline		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	7	9	8	1	4	5
			Sport (HL+RR)		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	MED		Longline		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	82
			Purse seine		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	12	9	11	2	9	10	6	4	5	4	2	3
	ATW		Longline		83	138	167	155	123	160	222	105	211	232	181	131	149	100	159	207	174	202	224	145	139	19	29	10	18	7	8	31	54	25
			Other surf.		0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	2	2	4	3	3	1
			Purse seine		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
			Sport (HL+RR)		0	0	0	14	3	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Landings	ATE	CP	Brazil		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
			China PR		0	0	0	0	85	103	80	68	39	19	41	24	42	72	119	42	38	36	36	38	37	45	54	64	79	89	101	101	72	116
			EU-Denmark		0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	6	6
			EU-España		3137	3819	6186	9519	4565	4429	3493	3633	4089	2172	2801	3102	2339	3680	3536	2409	1550	1483	1329	1553	1282	1655	1986	2509	2489	2729	3289	2953	3301	3464
			EU-France		336	725	563	269	613	588	542	629	755	648	561	818	1218	629	233	366	228	135	148	223	212	254	343	330	461	462	557	539	540	637
			EU-Ireland		0	0	0	14	21	52	22	8	15	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	4	10	13	19	14	32	16	17	6	16	16	20	19
			EU-Netherlands		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	
			EU-Portugal		363	169	199	712	323	411	441	404	186	61	27	82	104	29	36	33	58	180	223	235	243	263	327	429	450	475	592	614	583	634
			Great Britain		0	1	0	1	1	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	5	22
			Guinea Ecuatorial		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	**0**
			Guinée Rep		330	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			Iceland		0	0	0	0	2	27	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	4	30	37	6	0	0	1	1	1	1	**0**
			Japan		2075	3971	3341	2905	3195	2690	2895	2425	2536	2695	2015	2598	1896	1612	2351	1904	1155	1089	1093	1129	1134	1386	1578	1905	2262	2514	2773	2779	2867	3083
			Korea Rep		4	205	92	203	0	0	6	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	161	181	208	232	247	242	252	274
			Maroc		720	678	1035	2068	2341	1591	2228	2497	2565	1795	1953	2389	1923	2418	1947	1909	1348	1055	990	960	959	1176	1433	1703	2164	2476	3089	2884	2704	2611
			Norway		0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	44	51	12	49	194	152	123	117
			Panama		1	19	550	255	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			Senegal		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			Sierra Leone		0	0	0	0	0	0	93	118	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
		NCC	Chinese Taipei		20	4	61	226	350	222	144	304	158	0	0	10	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
		NCO	Faroe Islands		0	0	0	0	67	104	118	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
			ICCAT (RMA)		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	2	2	2
			NEI (Flag related)		68	189	71	208	66	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
			Seychelles		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	MED	CP	Albania		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	9	34	40	47	56	100	156	168	148	178	264
			Algeria		1560	156	638	829	1674	1760	2083	2098	2056	1504	1440	1500	1673	1489	1311	0	0	0	69	244	244	370	448	1038	1300	1437	1649	1650	1655	1995
			China PR		97	137	93	49	0	20	0	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			EU-Croatia		1410	1220	1360	1105	906	970	930	903	977	1139	828	1017	1022	825	834	619	389	371	369	384	385	456	515	630	738	827	903	903	816	988
			EU-Cyprus		10	10	10	10	21	31	61	85	91	79	105	149	110	1	132	2	3	10	18	17	18	22	59	110	133	151	153	169	168	189
			EU-España		2741	4607	2588	2209	2000	2003	2772	2234	2215	2512	2353	2758	2689	2414	2465	1769	1056	942	1064	948	1164	1238	1467	1688	2706	2660	2774	3228	2760	3243
			EU-France		11843	9604	9171	8235	7122	6156	6794	6167	5832	5859	6471	8638	7663	10200	2670	3087	1755	805	791	2191	2216	2565	3054	3661	4360	4919	5316	5289	5303	5963
			EU-Greece		886	1004	874	1217	286	248	622	361	438	422	389	318	255	285	330	373	224	172	176	178	161	195	218	235	267	313	334	327	424	367
			EU-Italy		6901	7076	10200	9619	4441	3283	3847	4383	4628	4981	4697	4853	4708	4638	2247	2749	1061	1783	1788	1938	1946	2273	2725	3196	3860	4286	4731	4699	4727	5136
			EU-Malta		580	590	402	396	409	449	378	224	244	258	264	350	270	334	296	316	136	142	137	155	160	182	212	261	308	338	387	382	387	428
			EU-Portugal		306	313	274	37	54	76	61	64	0	2	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			Egypt		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	64	77	77	155	99	124	181	263	122	327	67	**0**
			Iceland		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			Japan		536	813	765	185	361	381	136	152	390	316	638	378	556	466	80	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			Korea Rep		684	458	591	410	66	0	0	0	0	0	700	1145	26	276	335	102	0	0	77	81	81	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			Libya		1422	1540	1388	1029	1331	1195	1549	1941	638	752	1300	1091	1327	1358	1318	1082	645	0	756	929	933	1153	1368	1631	1792	2052	2228	2232	2223	2530
			Maroc		1092	1035	386	535	687	636	695	511	421	762	827	108	463	641	531	369	205	182	223	309	310	322	350	439	407	444	365	410	862	1053
			Panama		1492	1498	2830	226	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			Syria		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	41	0	34	0	0	0	0	40	47	57	66	72	79	0	79	**0**
			Tunisie		2773	1897	2393	2200	1745	2352	2184	2493	2528	791	2376	3249	2545	431	2679	1932	1042	852	1017	1057	1047	1248	1486	1783	2102	2380	2653	2730	2659	2698
			Turkiye		3466	4219	4616	5093	3899	1200	1070	2100	2300	3300	1075	990	806	918	879	665	410	519	536	551	555	1091	1324	1515	1284	1771	2238	2266	2295	3282
		NCC	Chinese Taipei		709	494	411	278	106	27	169	329	308	445	51	267	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
		NCO	Gibraltar		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	14	16	15	17	20	22	25	28
			ICCAT (RMA)		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
			Israel		0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
			NEI (Flag related)		427	639	171	1058	761	78	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
			NEI (combined)		773	211	0	101	1030	1995	109	571	508	610	709	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
			NEI (inflated)		0	0	0	0	9471	16894	16458	15298	15880	18873	18376	14164	18343	28234	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
			Palestine		0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	10	2	2	1
			Serbia & Montenegro		0	2	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	ATW	CP	Brazil		0	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
			Canada		392	576	597	503	595	576	549	524	604	557	537	600	733	491	575	530	505	474	477	480	463	531	466	472	550	666	580	626	613	598
			EU-España		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			EU-Portugal		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			FR-St Pierre et Miquelon		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	1	10	5	0	4	3	2	8	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			Japan		427	387	436	322	691	365	492	506	575	57	470	265	376	277	492	162	353	578	289	317	302	347	345	346	406	406	407	410	657	610
			Korea Rep		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			Mexico		4	23	19	2	8	14	29	10	12	22	9	10	14	7	7	10	14	14	51	23	51	53	55	34	80	39	28	63	60	39
			Panama		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**

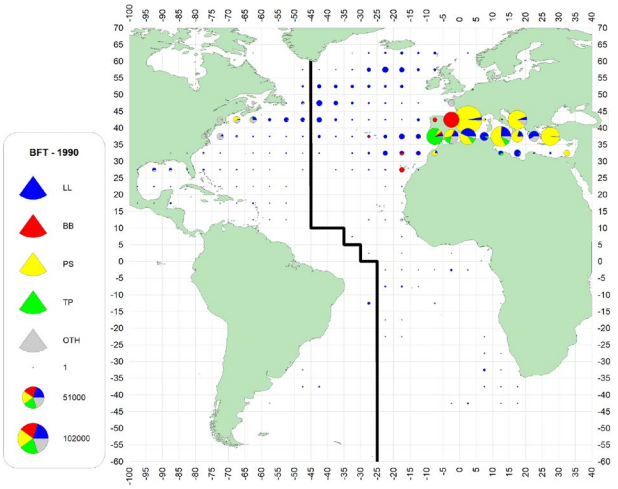
				1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
			UK-Bermuda	0	0	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
			UK-British Virgin Islands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			UK-Turks and Caicos	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			USA	1163	1311	1285	1334	1235	1213	1212	1583	1840	1426	899	717	468	758	764	1068	803	738	713	502	667	877	1002	986	1013	1185	1178	1177	1311	1292
		NCC	Chinese Taipei	0	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
		NCO	Argentina	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
			Cuba	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	11	19	27	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
			Dominica	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
			ICCAT (RMA)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
			NEI (Flag related)	0	0	0	0	0	429	270	49	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
			St a Lucia	43	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Discards	ATE	CP	EU-Denmark	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
			Japan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	7	9	8	1	4	5
	MED		Albania	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			EU-Croatia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	5	2	2	4	5	6	4	5	4	2	3
			EU-Cyprus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
			EU-España	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	77
			Libya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			Tunisie	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
			Türkiye	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
	ATW		Canada	0	0	0	6	16	11	46	13	37	14	15	0	2	0	1	3	25	36	17	0	0	3	8	1	4	3	5	5	6	4
			Japan	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
			Mexico	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			USA	83	138	171	155	110	149	176	98	174	218	167	131	147	100	138	204	150	166	206	139	143	22	24	10	15	6	8	28	50	20



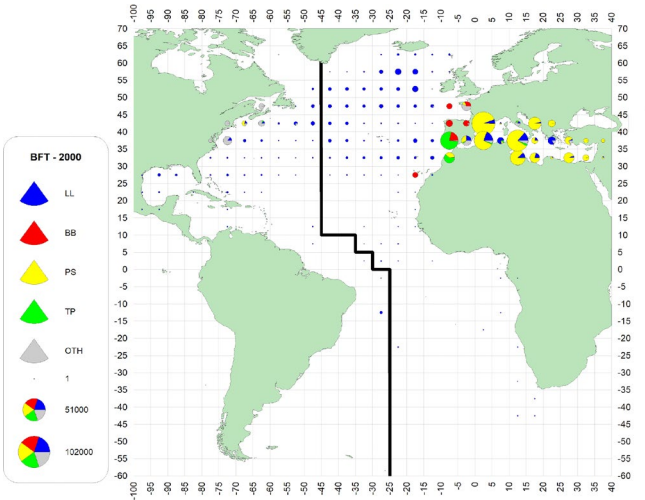
a) BFT (1970-79)



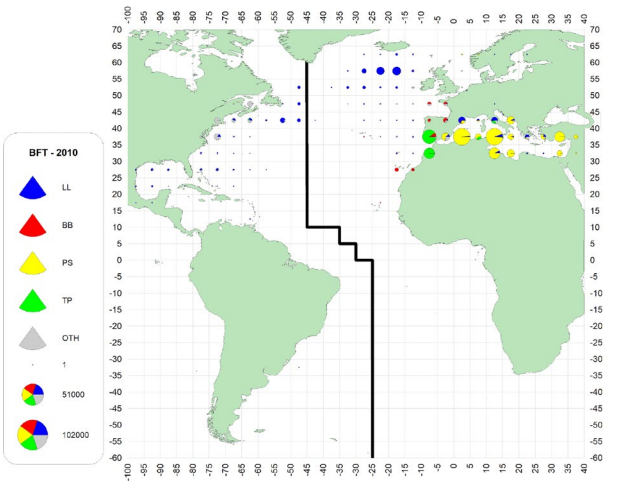
b) BFT (1980-89)



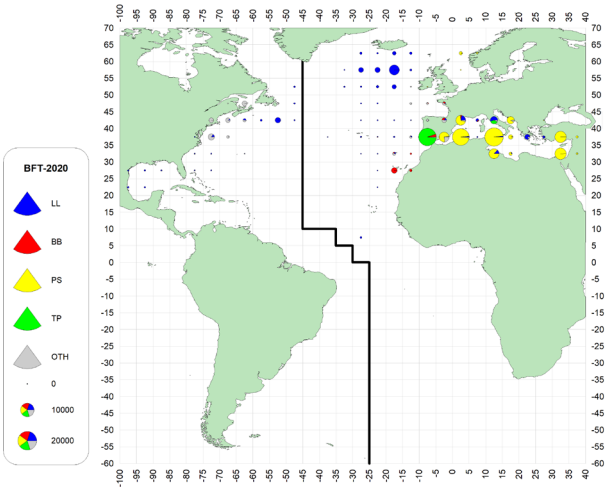
c) BFT (1990-99)



d) BFT (2000-09)

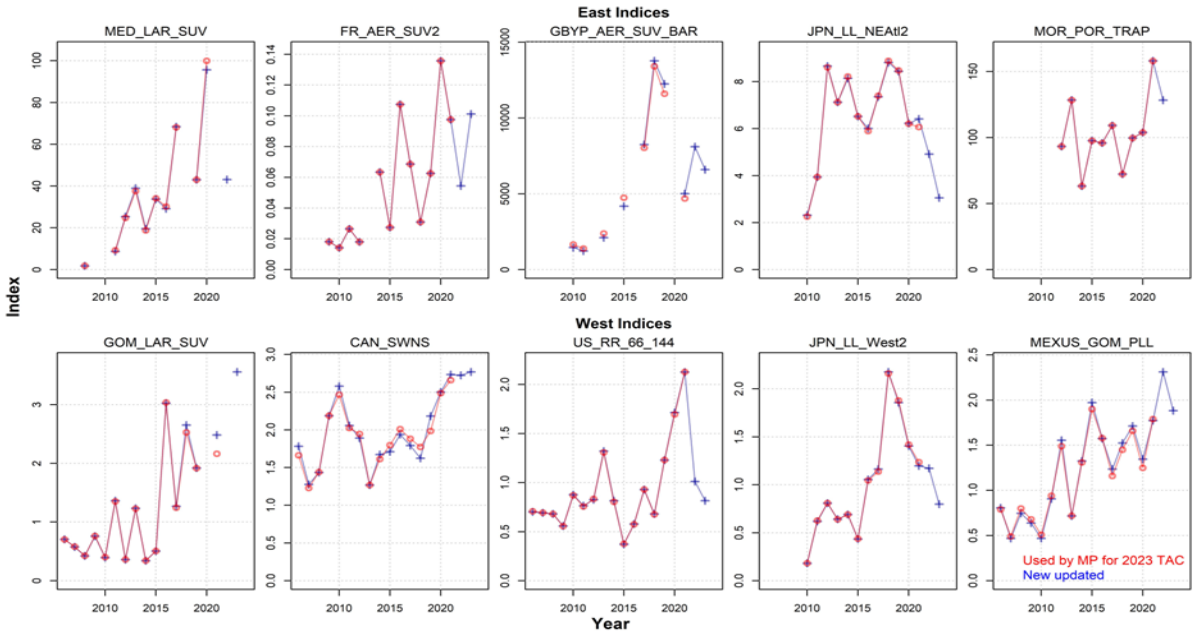


e) BFT (2010-19)

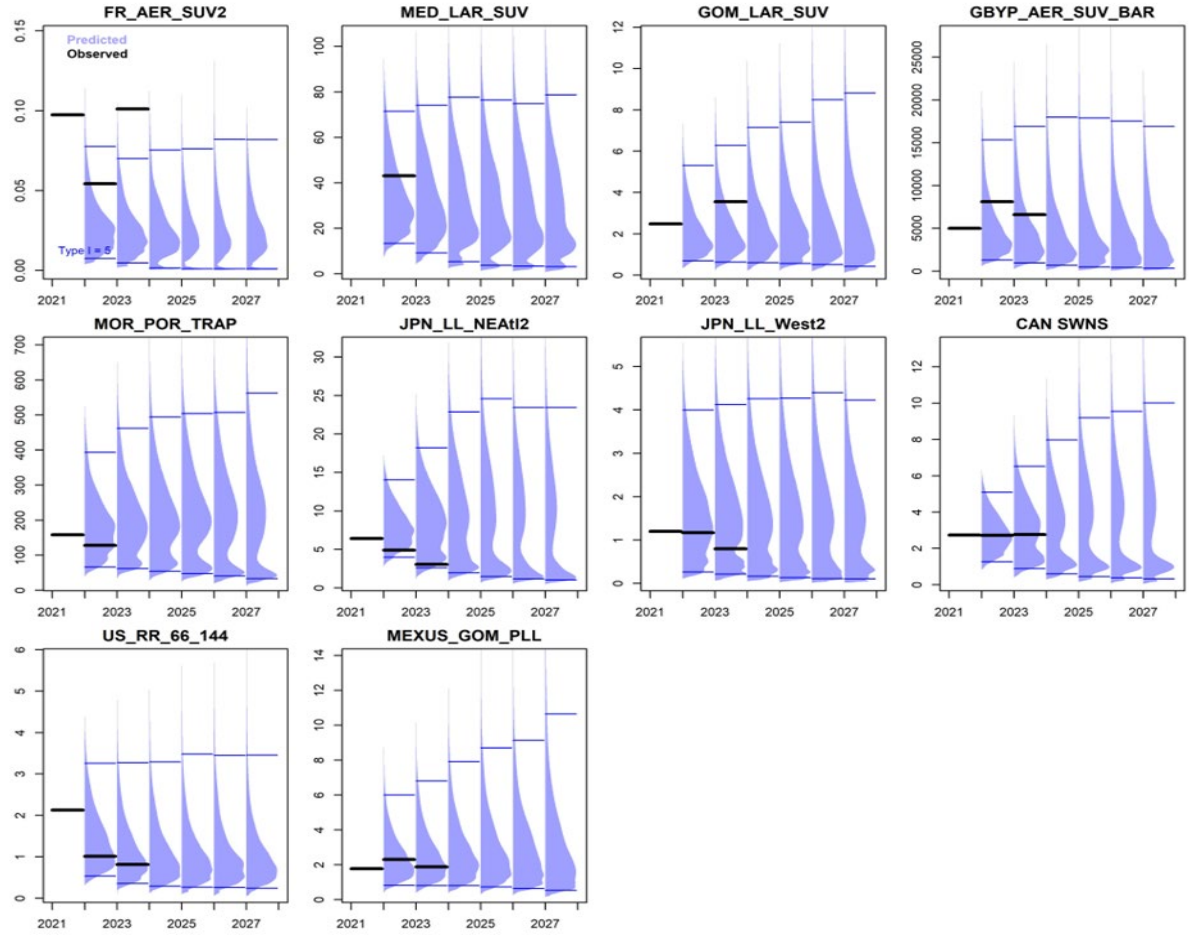


f) BFT (2020-22)

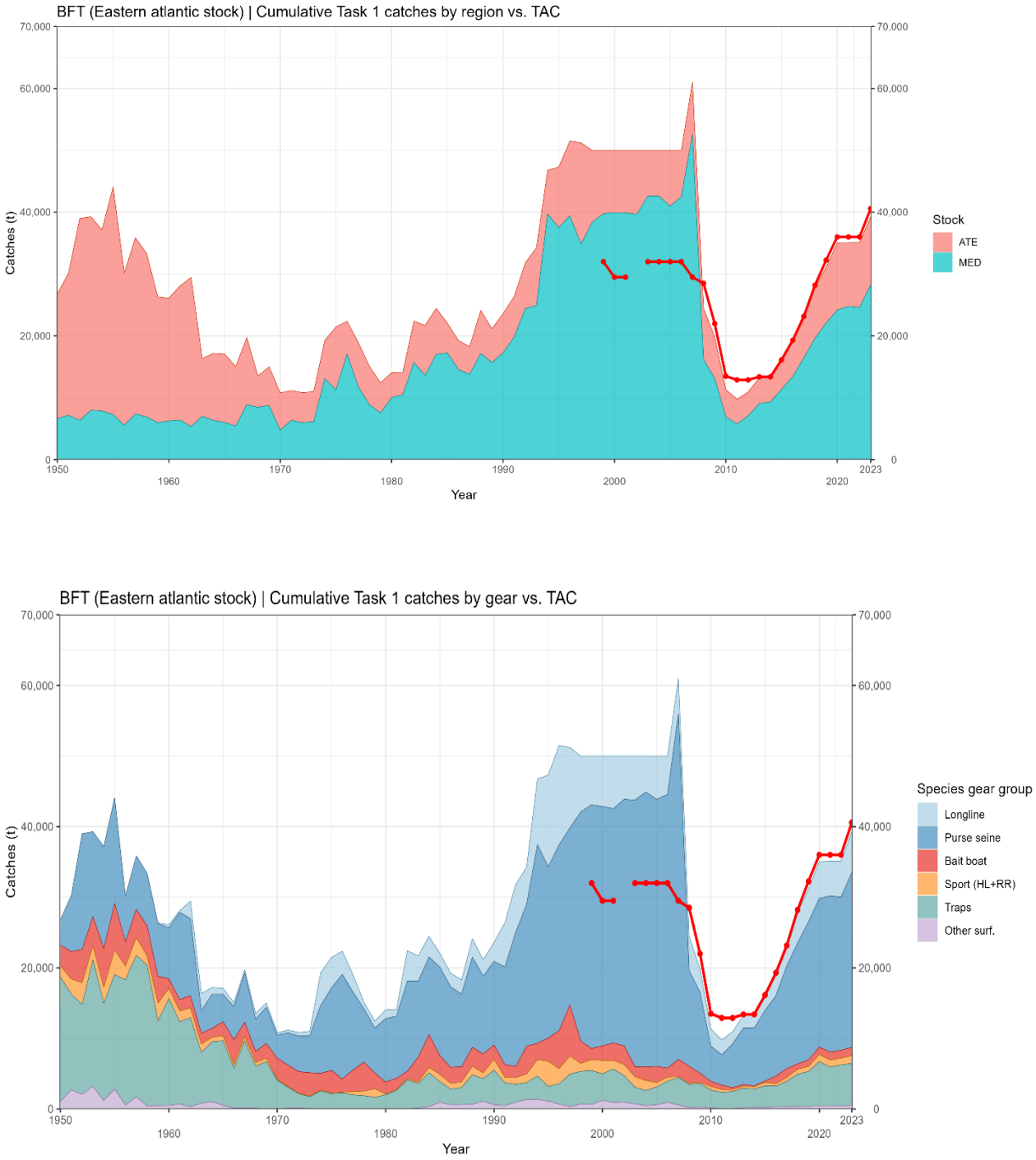
BFT-Figure 1. Geographic distribution of bluefin tuna catches per 5x5 degrees and per main gears from 1970 to 2022 (last decade only covers 3 years).



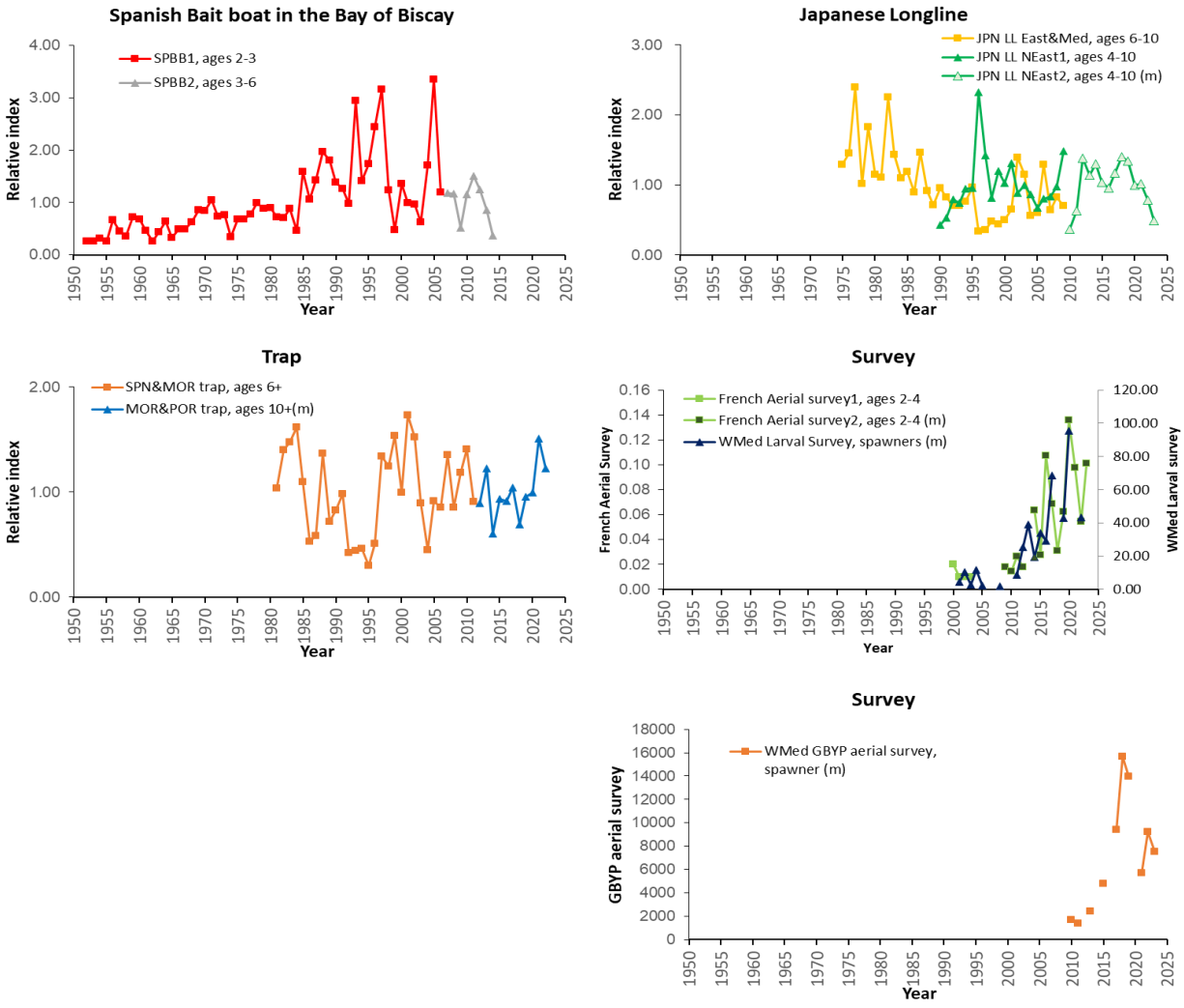
BFT-Figure 2 Comparison of the indices used in the MP calculations in 2022 (with data up to 2021, red) and the updated versions of these indices using data up to 2023 (blue). The West Mediterranean Larval survey and the Moroccan-Portugal trap data point for 2023 were not available.



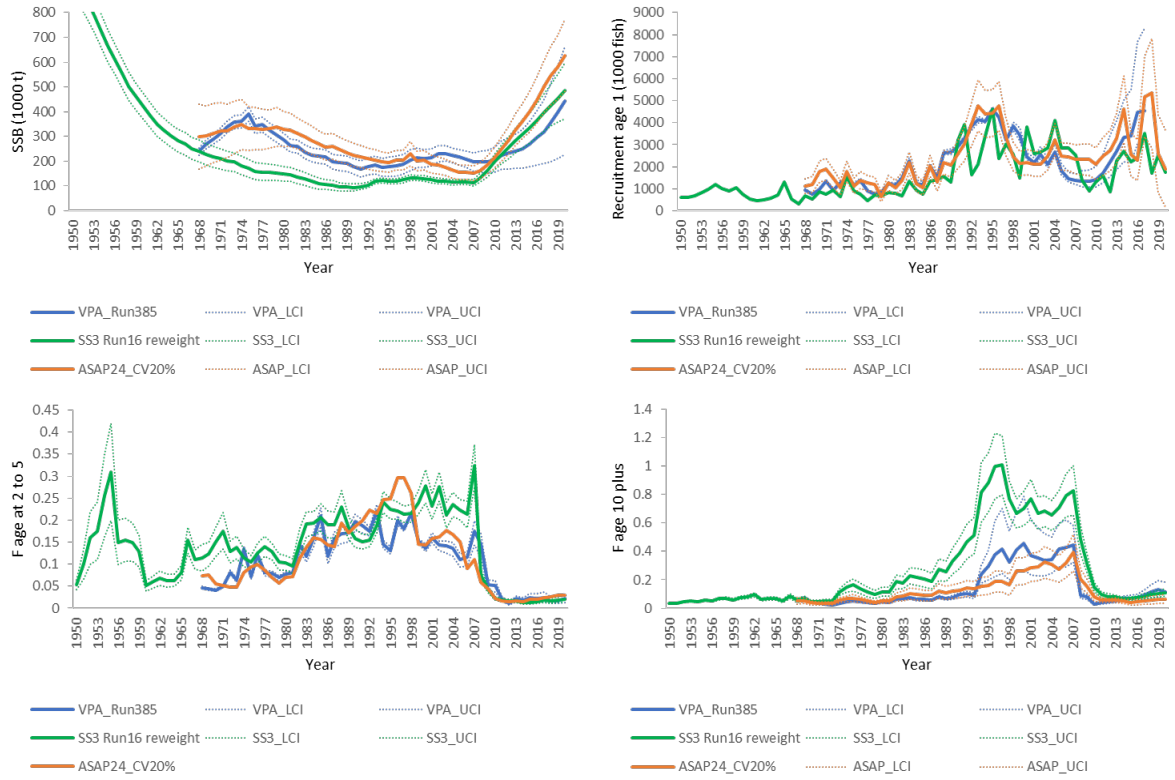
BFT-Figure 3. Plots of observed individual indices (black bars) and distribution of predicted data (blue density distribution) for the reference grid of operating models (n =2304, 48 operating models, 48 simulations each). Blue bars represent the 95% intervals. The West Mediterranean Larval survey and the Moroccan-Portugal trap index data point for 2023 were not available.



BFT-E-Figure 1. Reported catch for the East Atlantic and Mediterranean from Task 1 data from 1950 to 2023 split by main geographic areas (top panel) and by gears (bottom panel) together with unreported catch estimated by the Committee from 1998 to 2007 and TAC levels since 1998 (red dotted lines).



BFT-E-Figure 2. Plots of the updated fishery dependent and independent indicators used for the East Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna stock. All fishery dependent indicators are standardized series and scaled to their averages. Indices denoted with a 'm' are used in the management procedure. The Spanish BB series was split in two series to account for changes in selectivity patterns, and the latest series was calculated using French BB data due to the sale of the quota by the Spanish fleet. The Japanese longline CPUE for the Northeast Atlantic was split in 2009/2010 and the French aerial survey index was split in 2008/2009. The data for the western Mediterranean Larval survey have been collected but the index was not able to be updated at the time of publication. The Moroccan-Portugal index data point for 2023 reflected substantial changes in the fishing operations, hence the index data point for this year is considered unavailable under the EC protocols (Rec. 23-07).



BFT-E-Figure 3. Comparisons of the trends in estimated spawning stock biomass (SSB), recruitment (age 1), F at age 2 to 5, and F at age 10 plus group between base cases by model platform: VPA (blue lines), Stock Synthesis (green lines), and ASAP (orange lines). The time series of recruitments for the VPA have the terminal three years removed as it is standard practice not to consider these due to their estimates being unreliable.