



ICCAT NEWSLETTER

No. 34, February 2022

Executive Secretary

Dear Readers,

On publication of this 34th issue of the ICCAT Newsletter, the Secretariat is pleased to express its gratitude for your much-appreciated company throughout 2021, and would like to wish you a healthy and prosperous 2022, despite, alas, the torment of the continuing pandemic! This latter has not spared the Contracting Parties and Cooperating Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), but the Commission has made significant progress together with the collaboration of all. Thus, building on its experience of intersessional meetings in virtual format, the Commission met in its annual session from 15 to 23 November 2021 for the first time by video conference. It was able to take the necessary decisions to better manage and conserve tuna and tuna-like species in its Convention area throughout 2022.

There are still many challenges ahead, but we will meet them together!

Happy reading!

Introduction

During the 27th Regular Meeting of the Commission, which was held Online from 15-23 November 2021, that was attended by over 480 delegates from 50 Contracting Parties, 5 Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties, 6 intergovernmental organizations, 25 Non-Governmental Organizations and 1 Non-Contracting Party: ICCAT adopted 21 Recommendation and 3 Resolutions covering relevant issues on Atlantic tuna and tuna-like species conservation and fisheries management.

In 2021, full scientific stock assessments were carried out for three species: western Atlantic bluefin (*Thunnus thynnus*), bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) and Mediterranean albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*).

- Rec. 21-01 Recommendation by ICCAT replacing Recommendation 19-02 replacing Recommendation 16-01 on a multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas
- Rec. 21-02 Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT extending and amending Recommendation 17-02 amending the Recommendation 16-03 for the conservation of North Atlantic swordfish
- Rec. 21-03 Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT on Recommendation 17-03 amending the Recommendation 16-04 for the conservation of South Atlantic swordfish
- Rec. 21-04 Recommendation by ICCAT on conservation and management measures, including a management procedure and Exceptional Circumstances Protocol, for North Atlantic albacore
- Rec. 21-05 Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 16-07 on South Atlantic albacore catch limits for the period 2017-2020
- Rec. 21-06 Recommendation by ICCAT to establish a rebuilding plan for Mediterranean albacore
- Rec. 21-07 Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 17-06 for an interim conservation and management plan for western Atlantic bluefin tuna



- Rec. 21-08 Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 19-04 establishing a multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean
- Rec. 21-09 Recommendation by ICCAT on the conservation of North Atlantic stock of shortfin mako caught in association with ICCAT fisheries
- Rec. 21-10 Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 19-07 amending the Recommendation 16-12 on management measures for the conservation of the North Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries
- Rec. 21-11 Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 19-08 on management measures for the conservation of South Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries
- Rec. 21-12 Recommendation on vessels without nationality
- Rec. 21-13 Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 18-08 on establishing a list of vessels presumed to have carried out Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing activities
- Rec. 21-14 Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 13-13 concerning the establishment of an ICCAT record of vessels 20 metres in length overall or greater authorized to operate in the Convention area
- Rec. 21-15 Recommendation by ICCAT on transshipment
- Rec. 21-16 Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 07-08 concerning data exchange format and protocol in relation to the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) for the bluefin tuna fishery in the ICCAT Convention area
- Res. 21-17 Resolution by ICCAT Establishing a Pilot Project for the Implementation of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) on Bluefin Tuna Processing Vessels
- Rec. 21-18 Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 20-08 on the application of the eBCD System
- Rec. 21-19 Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 18-13 replacing Recommendation 11-20 on an ICCAT bluefin tuna catch documentation program
- Rec. 21-20 Recommendation by ICCAT to continue the development of an Integrated Online Reporting System
- Res. 21-21 Resolution by ICCAT establishing an ICCAT Working Group on Catch Document Scheme
- Res. 21-22 Resolution by ICCAT for the establishment of an ICCAT Working Group on the use of Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS)
- Res. 21-23 Resolution by ICCAT establishing a process to address labor standards in ICCAT fisheries
- Rec. 21-24 Recommendation by ICCAT replacing Recommendation 03-20 on criteria for attaining the status of Cooperating Non-Contracting Party, Entity or Fishing Entity in ICCAT



RECENT MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE SINCE THE LAST ISSUE

Commission meetings

- [Second Intersessional Meeting of Panel 4 \(Online, 27 October 2021\)](#)
- [Meeting of Panel 2 on BFT-MSE \(Online, 12 November 2021\)](#)
- [Meeting of the Compliance Committee \(COC\) \(Online, 13-14 November 2021\)](#)
- [27th Regular Meeting of the Commission \(Online, 15-23 November 2021\)](#)

SCRS meetings

- [Meeting of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics \(SCRS\) \(Online, 27 September to 2 October 2021\)](#)
- [North-eastern Atlantic porbeagle data compilation Workshop aiming 2022 ICCAT-ICES stock assessment \(Online, 29 November – 3 December 2021\)](#)

Workshops

- [GBYP Workshop on e-tagging planning, database development and data sharing](#)
- [GBYP Workshop on larval indices coordination and standardization](#)

External meetings

Between September 2021 and February 2022, members of the Secretariat staff have participated actively in meetings and activities related to ICCAT, providing both written and/or oral contributions.

- [Mediterranean Advisory Council \(MEDAC\) \(Online, 6 October 2021\)](#)
- [FAO Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System \(FIRMS\) Steering Committee Meeting \(Online 18-21 October 2021\)](#)
- [Iberian symposium on modeling and assessment of fishery resources SIMERPE \(Vigo, Spain 19-20 October 2021\)](#)
- [2nd \(virtual\) meeting of the WECAFC/CITES/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on shark conservation and management \(Online 20-22 October 2021\)](#)
- [FAO Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics \(CWP\) - Intersessional Meetings of Aquaculture \(7th session\) and Fisheries \(28th session\) Subject Groups, joint sessions \(Online 2-5 November 2021\)](#)

OTHER SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES

The ICCAT [Atlantic-wide Research Programme on Bluefin Tuna \(GBYP\)](#) Phase 10, which was extended for 7 months, until 31 July 2021, to complete the activities delayed due to COVID 19 pandemics, has been successfully closed. GBYP Phase 11, which started on 1st January 2021, has been extended for 6 months, until 30 June 2022, to allow properly finishing several ongoing scientific activities also affected by delays caused by COVID impact. Phase 12 workplan, whose proposal will be submitted to the major funder shortly, is being drafted under the supervision of the GBYP Steering Committee. The budget for this new Phase has been reduced to a total amount of €1,500,000 in line with the information provided earlier to the SCRS and the Commission in 2021, but this will not prevent to further develop all the research lines requested by the SCRS. This will be possible through gains in the program's efficiency derived from several initiatives, as the signature of Memorandums of Understanding aiming electronic tagging and the higher proportion of "in house" analysis that are less costly, focused on the management of the huge dataset produced in previous phases. Specifically, the most relevant research activities carried out during this reporting period included: further development of relational databases for farming, biological and electronic tagging data, thorough review of the indices provided by the aerial survey on bluefin tuna spawning aggregations; electronic



tagging campaigns carried out by various CPs teams through MoU between ICCAT and their respective institutions, further biological sampling and analyses, external review of MSE code, as well several tasks aiming at evaluating the feasibility of implementing a new methodological approach based on genetic techniques, the Close-Kin, for improving the evaluation and management of BFT Eastern stock. Additional information can be found [here](#).

The **Small Tunas Year Programme (SMTYP)** continued the collection of biological samples aimed at growth, maturity and stock structure studies on small tuna species (little tunny, LTA, *Euthynnus alletteratus*; Atlantic bonito, BON, *Sarda sarda*; and wahoo, WAH, *Acanthocybium solandri*) by a consortium of 11 institutions (9 CPCs). In addition, the samples have been processed and analyzed to: i) fill the specific gaps for estimating the growth and maturity parameters for BON and LTA in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean Sea; ii) estimate growth and maturity parameters for LTA and BON, and provide preliminary results for WAH; and, iii) determine the stock structure for BON, LTA and WAH. In addition, the Consortium has started sampling two new species (bullet tuna, BLT, *Auxis rochei*; and the frigate tuna, *Auxis thazard*) to assess the stock structure for these species. The programme has also identified new research activities to be developed throughout 2022-2024 including: updating the biological meta-database, estimation of length-weight relationships representative at the stocks/regional level; calibration and adopting internationally agreed maturity scales and, further investigating and applying of Data Limited methods to be used for the provision of management advice to these stocks.

Enhanced Programme for Billfish Research (EPBR) The EPBR has continued its activities although the pandemic has heavily impacted the collection of samples, particularly onboard industrial vessels. It is expected that the sample collection to be resumed throughout 2022 to allow developing biological studies on key population parameters for the three major billfish species (blue and white marlins and sailfish) in the eastern Atlantic. A total of 452 samples have now been collected from those species both by artisanal and industrial fleets, and sampling processing and analysis is ongoing. All otoliths collected were sent to the Fish Ageing Services in Australia for age reading. This work, which is being carried out by a Consortium of western African countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon and Senegal,) together with EU countries (Portugal and Spain) is essential to improve billfish stock assessments. Therefore, a new contract has been signed with the Consortium for developing the workplan for 2022.

Within the **Shark Research and Data Collection Programme (SRDCP)** electronic tags have been deployed in shark species currently subject to a prohibition on retention in ICCAT (i.e. threshers, silk, oceanic whitetip and hammerhead sharks), to fill knowledge gaps on their distribution, movements, habitat use and post-release mortality. The work on the age and growth of the South Atlantic shortfin mako study continues (currently incorporating samples from Brazil, Japan and Namibia that have been processed) with vertebra readings and should be completed by the end 2022. The shortfin mako stock structure and phylogeography study also continued through the use of two genome-wide analysis approaches: whole mitochondrial genome analysis and nuclear-genome-wide single-nucleotide polymorphism.

PUBLICATIONS

Issue 1 to 10 of Volume 78 of the *Collective Volume of Scientific Papers*, including 152 scientific papers and reports presented to the SCRS during 2021, have been published.



2022 CALENDER OF EVENTS

The following events are scheduled to be held in 2022:

Commission meetings

- Meeting of the Online Reporting Technology Working Group (IOMS) (Online, 7-8 February 2022)
- Meeting of the Mediterranean Albacore Working Group (Online, 9-10 February 2022)
- First Meeting of the Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS) Working Group (Online, 28 February 2022)
- Intersessional Meeting of Panel 2 (including BFT MSE) (Online, 1-4 March 2022)
- Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Labour Standards (Online, 14-15 March 2022)
- Meeting of the Working Group on Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS) (Online, 4-5 April 2022)
- Meeting of the eBCD Technical Working Group (TWG) (Online, 6-7 April 2022)
- Second Intersessional Meeting of Panel 2 on Bluefin Tuna MSE (Online, 9 May 2022)
- Second Meeting of the Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS) Working Group (Online, 6-7 June 2022)
- 15th Meeting of the Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM) Working Group (Online, 8-10 June 2022)
- Meeting of the Port Inspection Expert Group for Capacity Building and Assistance (Online, 13 June 2022)
- Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1 (TBD, 30 June-1 July 2022)
- 3rd Intersessional Meeting of Panel 2 on BFT MSE (Online, 14 October 2022)
- Intersessional Meeting of Panel 4 (TBD, 13 November 2022)
- 23rd Special Meeting of the Commission (TBD, 14-21 November 2022)

SCRS meetings

- Skipjack Data Preparatory Meeting (Online, 21-25 February 2022)
- ICCAT/ICES: North-eastern Porbeagle Benchmark Meeting (Online, 7 and 11 March (TBC) 2022)
- Atlantic Swordfish Data Preparatory Meeting (including N-SWO MSE) (Online, 21 Mar - 1 April 2022)
- Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna Data Preparatory Meeting (Online, 18-26 April 2022)
- Meeting of the BFT MSE Technical Sub-Group (Online, 3-6 May 2022)
- Meeting of the Sharks Species Group (Online, 16-18 May 2022)
- Meeting of the Tropical Tunas MSE Technical Group (Online, 19-20 May 2022)
- Skipjack Stock Assessment Meeting (Online, 23-27 May 2022)
- Meeting of the Sub-committee on Ecosystems (Online, 31 May-3 June 2022)
- Meeting of the Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods (WGSAM) (Online, 31 May-3 June 2022)
- ICCAT/ICES North-eastern Porbeagle Stock Assessment Meeting (Online, 14 and 17 June (TBC) 2022)
- Atlantic Swordfish Stock Assessment Meeting (Online, 20-29 June 2022)
- Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna Stock Assessment Meeting (Online, 4-12 July 2022)
- Meeting of the BFT MSE Technical Working Group (Online, 5-9 September 2022)
- SCRS Species Group Meetings (TBD, 19-24 September 2022)
- Meeting of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) (TBD, 26 September-3 October 2022)



Other activities

The following activities that were funded by the **ICCAT-Japan Capacity-building Assistance Project (JCAP-2)** were concluded since the last issue of the ICCAT Newsletter:

1. *Restructuring and recovery of the statistical system in Liberia* - This initiative aimed to set a specific data collection programme for Liberian tuna and tuna-like species. The project was based on an initial three-year plan that started in 2018, whose goals were to further develop the means for collection, processing and reporting of fisheries catch and effort data from artisanal and semi-industrial Liberian fisheries. This project followed the capacity building workshop held in 2017 and financed by JCAP, which was concluded in late 2020.
2. *Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE): from the theory to practice* - Three courses were organized online for fisheries scientists, managers and stakeholders, from Latin-American countries and other Portuguese and Spanish speaking countries members of ICCAT. The first two courses targeting scientists were scheduled in August 2021 and, included 50 applications from 14 different ICCAT CPCs. Course #3 (held on November 2021) targeted managers and provided a presentation of the philosophy, concepts and a study case, based on the initial results observed and presented at the last ICCAT meeting on MSE for the western skipjack tuna stock.
3. *Hiring an expert to evaluate the current fisheries data base system of Senegal and propose a model for improvement* - This project aimed to evaluate the current Senegalese national observer programme for the industrial tuna fishing fleet and its further improvement. An international call for tenders was launched aiming the selection of an expert and issuing a short-term contract. The expert report contains a detailed description of the issues related to the current fisheries data base system of Senegal, a proposal for a new electronic system that can accommodate current needs and the respective costs and needs on capacity building.

Two new projects will be funded by JCAP-2 throughout 2022:

1. Pilot study on an *Automatic fish count and length/weight estimation system for Bluefin tuna farms*, to be developed by Morocco and Japanese Hi-tech companies.
2. A project to be developed by Belize to *Improve the collection of pertinent fisheries data on recreational fisheries (including fishing tournaments)*, and the *Development of a mobile application to be used by anglers for the reporting of fisheries data*.

Since September 2021 the Secretariat has received the following **voluntary contributions**:

- In September 2021, the United States Fund for Tropical Tuna was established through a voluntary contribution to support the work to conclude the Atlantic Ocean Tropical Tuna Tagging Programme (AOTTP) in the amount of US\$80,000 and to finance a software upgrade to continue development of a tool to support decision making on tropical tunas (\$US20,000).
- In January 2022, Chinese Taipei made a voluntary financial contribution to ICCAT for fiscal year 2022. This voluntary contribution amount to €111,000 in total, with €100,000 for the Commission, €5,000 for IOMS, €2,000 for GBYP and €4,000 for Enhanced Programme for Billfish Research.
- In January 2022, the United States made an additional voluntary financial contribution to ICCAT in the total amount of US\$100,000, accounting for US\$20,000 to support the Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Fund (MCS Fund) and US\$80,000 for the US Capacity Building Fund. The latter includes US\$10,000 for the implementation of ICCAT's electronic Bluefin Tuna Catch Documentation System (eBCD) and US\$70,000 to support efforts by ICCAT's SCRS to improve the collection and reporting of fisheries statistics in artisanal fisheries, in particular to address known data gaps and improve inputs for future stock assessments through scientific capacity building.



In addition, a new grant agreement proposal was submitted to the European Union:

- In September 2021, a new one-year contract proposal was submitted to continue the *Development and capacity building within the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas - Online Management System*. This contract, which is expected to be signed soon, includes a voluntary contribution from the European Union of €100,000.

Due to the impact of the pandemic on the ICCAT activities, the following contracts with the European Union were extended throughout 2022:

- In October 2021, a 6-month extension until 30 June 2022 was agreed to the EU grant agreement SI2.859159 *Strengthening the scientific basis on tuna and tuna-like species for decision-making in ICCAT*. This voluntary contribution from the European Union amounts to €618,770.
- In November 2021, a 6-month extension until 30 June 2022 was agreed to the EU grant agreement SI2.839201 *ICCAT- Atlantic-Wide Research Programme for the Bluefin Tuna Phase 11*. The voluntary contribution from the European Union amounts to €1,280,000, whereas the remaining €320,000 are provided voluntarily by other ICCAT Contracting Parties which have a bluefin tuna quota.

In December 2021, a 1-year extension until the end of 2022 was agreed to the EU grant agreement SI2.839492 *2021 Intersessional Meetings of Panel 4, Panel 1, Panel 2 and IMM Working Group*. The European voluntary contribution amount to €300,000.

Finally, the Secretariat is currently working with the EU aiming at 3 new grant agreement proposals for 2022. These will ensure the following additional voluntary contributions by the European Union:

- *ICCAT- Atlantic-Wide Research Programme for the Bluefin Tuna (GBYP), Phase 12* - €1,200,000
- *Strengthening the scientific basis on tuna and tuna-like species for decision-making in ICCAT* - €450,000
- *Capacity Development Fund in ICCAT* - €300,000

OTHER NEWS

27TH REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission elected a new Chairman, Mr. Ernesto Penas Lado (European Union) and expressed its profound appreciation for the excellent service that the outgoing Chair, Mr. Raul Delgado (Panama) had dedicated to the Commission over the past four years.

Additionally, the Commission elected a new 1st Vice Chair, Mrs. Zakia Driouich (Morocco). Mr. Ramon Chong (Curaçao) was elected as 2nd Vice Chair replacing Mrs. Zakia Driouich (Morocco) and Ms. Deirdre Warner-Kramer (United States) was elected Chair of the STACFAD, replacing Mr. Hasan Alper Elekon (Turkey). Mr. Neil Ansell (EU), was reelected Chair of the Permanent Working Group for the Improvement of ICCAT Statistics and Conservation Measures (PWG) and Mr. Derek Campbell (United States) was also reelected Chair of the Compliance Committee. Finally, Ghana and Algeria were elected to Chair Panels 1 and 4, respectively, while Japan and South Africa remain chairing Panels 2 and 3. Through this Newsletter, the Secretariat we would like to thank all the former Chairs for their hard work and wish them all the best to the new Chairs.

Dr Haritz Arrizabalaga (EU-Spain) has been elected Vice-Chair of the SCRS.

During the 27th Regular Meeting of the Commission, it was agreed that the **23rd Special Meeting of the Commission** will be held between 14 and 21 November 2022.