

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, 4 March 2024

## ICCAT GBYP CIRCULAR # G-00129/2024

**SUBJECT: CALL FOR TENDERS - HIRE AN EXPERT IN FISHERIES GENOMICS TO ASSIST THE ATLANTIC-WIDE RESEARCH PROGRAMME FOR BLUEFIN TUNA STEERING COMMITTEE (ICCAT GBYP - PHASE 13)**

I should like to transmit the Call for Tenders aiming at hiring an expert in fish genomics, to assist the Atlantic-Wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna (GBYP) Steering Committee on matters related to Genetic Close Kin Mark Recapture (CKMR).

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

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- **Commission Officers:**

**Commission Chair:** E. Penas Lado  
**First Vice Chair:** Z. Driouich  
**Second Vice Chair:** R. Chong  
**Chairs Panels 1-4**  
**SCRS Chair:** C. Brown

**COC Chair:** D. Campbell  
**PWG Chair:** N. Ansell  
**STACFAD Chair:** D. Warner-Kramer

- **Head delegates/Head Scientists**

- **Cooperating Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities**

**Attachment:** Terms of Reference - Hire an expert in fisheries genomics to assist the Atlantic-Wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna Steering Committee (English version only).

**Terms of Reference**  
**Hire an expert in fisheries genomics to assist the**  
**Atlantic-Wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna Steering Committee**  
**(ICCAT GBYP – Phase 13)**

## **1. Background**

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) advice.

Therefore, key tasks are to reduce uncertainty in stock assessment and to provide robust management advice. This requires improved knowledge of key biological processes and parameters. Currently almost all the data used in stock assessments are obtained from fisheries-dependent data, which can be affected by changes in exploitation patterns and TACs. It is therefore important to obtain data from alternative sources in order to verify the assumptions made when conducting the assessments or to improve the data sets used in OM within the framework of the bluefin tuna (BFT) management strategy evaluation (MSE).

One of the main uncertainties affecting Atlantic BFT stocks assessment is the lack of knowledge about the absolute abundance of the stocks. One methodology that could address this uncertainty is genetic Close-Kin Mark-Recapture (CKMR), which uses the frequency of closely related individuals (e.g. parent offspring, siblings), determined through genetic tagging and analyses, to estimate absolute number or exploitation rate, either of which can be directly used in stock assessments or harvest control rules. Given that this approach requires a well-designed massive sampling of both adults and juveniles, based on a good knowledge of 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 Close-Kin Mark-Recapture study for eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna.

Within this framework, the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) is seeking a qualified expert in fish genomics, with knowledge of genetic methods applied in CKMR methodology, to serve as advisor to the GBYP Steering Committee (SC) on matters related to CKMR methodology and its application to the assessment of Atlantic BFT stocks. The main role of GBYP SC is to guide and refine the Programme, and comprises the ICCAT Executive Secretary, the SCRS Chair (Dr Craig Brown), the rapporteurs of the Bluefin Tuna Species group (Dr Enrique Rodríguez-Marin and Dr John Walter) and an external independent expert (Dr Ana Parma).

The contract, framed within the ongoing phase 13 of the GBYP programme, should be initially for a 4-month appointment, until 31 July 2024, with remote work option and 1-week required travel to attend the Intersessional Meeting of the SCRS Bluefin Tuna Species Group that will be held in Sliema, Malta, from 15 to 18 April 2024 (travel expenses would be covered by GBYP).

Consequently, this Call for Tenders is launched for the submission of expressions of interest from genomics experts to act as advisor to the GBYP Steering Committee on CKMR issues, as detailed below. Funds will be made available under GBYP Phase 13, for covering the related costs.

## **2. Contractor tasks**

The Contractor, who will work in close consultation with the ICCAT Secretariat and the GBYP Steering Committee, will conduct the following activities:

- Provide advice on the suitability of the available genetic methods for a CKMR study for East Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna, namely to estimate absolute spawner abundance;
- Compile all available genomic information on Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna stocks structure and interbreeding, by reviewing previous genetic studies;
- Assist in the development of a best practices guide for DNA tissue sampling, genotyping, stock-of-origin assignment, and kinship determination (parent-offspring pairs, half-sibling, and full-sibling);

- Advise on the suitability of the epigenetic aging methodologies developed to implement an epigenetic clock in Atlantic bluefin tuna, including cost-efficiency;
- Provide a presentation or report for the April 2024 Intersessional Meeting of the BFT Species Group.

### 3. Deliverables

**Deliverable #1** - An **interim report** written following the structure of an SCRS paper, including the state and an evaluation of the work developed up to now in relation to the implementation of the CKMR approach to Atlantic bluefin tuna, which will be provided by **08 April 2024** and presented at the Intersessional Meeting of the SCRS BFT Species Group, to be held in Sliema (Malta) from 15 to 18 April 2024. The BFT Species Group, its Rapporteurs and the SCRS Chair, in consultation with the ICCAT Secretariat, will review the deliverable and communicate any necessary revisions (if applicable) to the Contractor and/or inform of approval within 5 days of the submission of this deliverable. The Contractor will submit the revised final documents (if changes are requested) within 10 days after the aforementioned 5-day period.

**Deliverable #2** - A **draft final report**, describing all the tasks developed by the Contractor and the results and recommendations derived from his/her work, will be submitted by **10 July 2024** at the latest. The GBYP Steering Committee, in consultation with the ICCAT Secretariat, will review the deliverable and communicate any necessary revisions (if applicable) to the Contractor and/or inform of approval within 5 days of the submission of this deliverable. The Contractor will submit the revised final document (if changes are requested) within 10 days after the aforementioned 5-day period.

**Deliverable #3** - A **final report**, to be prepared taking into account any comments provided by the GBYP Steering Committee and the ICCAT Secretariat, will be submitted by **30 July 2024**, at the latest.

### 4. Contractor minimum qualifications

- Documented experience in fish genomics (previous experience in CKMR methodology will be preferred);
- Full availability to attend in-person the Intersessional Meeting of the BFT Species Group, as well as any GBYP Steering Committee online meeting that might be scheduled within the contract period;
- Excellent working knowledge of English.

### 5. Request for proposals

Interested experts should submit a proposal exclusively to the attention of Mr Camille Jean Pierre Manel, ICCAT Executive Secretary, at the following address: [camille.manel@iccat.int](mailto:camille.manel@iccat.int) with copy to Ms. Stasa Tensek ([stasa.tensek@iccat.int](mailto:stasa.tensek@iccat.int)), by **17 March 2024** including:

- a) Acknowledgment of this Call for Tenders.
- b) A detailed proposal, based on the TORs of this Call for Tenders. Departures from the TORs may be made with detailed justification.
- c) The *curriculum vitae* of the applicant, including the full address.
- d) An estimated total budget for carrying out the work. Being a short-term contract, the budget will be expressed as a lump sum figure.
- e) The name, address, and telephone number for contact purposes of the expert.
- f) The bank account of the expert/entity (bank name and address, full name of the account holder, account number, IBAN and SWIFT codes) and, if applicable, the VAT/TAX identification code.
- g) A declaration that the expert will follow the terms of this Call for Tenders, and/or any approved modifications agreed upon, and the administrative rules specified in the contract.

- h) A declaration that the comments eventually made on the draft final report (**Deliverable #2**) will be incorporated into the final report (**Deliverable #3**).
- i) A declaration that the expert is covered by full insurance for the work to be carried out according to this Call for Tenders, excluding ICCAT from all responsibility concerning the work to be performed.
- j) A statement specifying the extent of agreement with all terms, conditions, and provisions included herein, particularly specifying the date for providing the draft final report (**Deliverable #2**) and the final report (**Deliverable #3**).

The Contractor should be available to attend and report to any meeting requested by ICCAT; in case of which the travel costs will be paid by ICCAT.

## 6. Payment details

Taking into account the schedule for carrying out the work, disbursements will be made according to the following schedule:

1. 50% of the total amount of the contract upon **signature of the contract** and after receiving a regular invoice which may be submitted at the latest 30 days after the signature of the contract;
2. 50% after the approval of **Deliverable #2** upon addressing comments by ICCAT and after receiving a regular invoice according to the work proposal and, if applicable, a complete set of documents concerning the expenses incurred under the contract.

## 7. Selection of proposals

The ICCAT Secretariat will review the offer(s). Following the revision process, the ICCAT Executive Secretary will notify the expert 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 in fish genomics (35%); iii) CKMR experience (30%); and iv) flexibility as regards future changes in requirements (10%).

## 8. 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. All documents submitted must be in English.

## 9. Copyright

All the material produced by the Contractor within the scope of this Call for Tenders will remain the property of GBYP for the uses of the programme and may not, in any case, be distributed by the Contractor. Scientific use of the data provided under this Call for Tenders by the Contractor will always be notified to ICCAT in advance.

For further information concerning this Call for Tenders, please contact the GBYP Coordinator at the following address: [francisco.alemany@iccat.int](mailto:francisco.alemany@iccat.int)