

Explanatory note on Draft recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 21-06 to establish a rebuilding plan for Mediterranean albacore

(submitted by the Chair of Panel 2)

The Ad Hoc Working Group on Mediterranean Albacore met online on February 9-10, 2022. The working group agreed that a supplementary recommendation to be adopted by the Commission at the 2022 ICCAT Annual Meeting would formalize the result on allocation (as per para 4 of Rec. 21-06) with the understanding that Türkiye may reopen the discussion and may lodge its formal objection in accordance with Article 8 of the Convention if the supplementary recommendation is adopted at the 2022 Annual Meeting.

Accordingly, the Chair of Panel 2 is submitting a draft recommendation amending the *Recommendation by ICCAT to establish a rebuilding plan for Mediterranean albacore* (Rec. 21-06).

Draft Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 21-06 to establish a rebuilding plan for Mediterranean albacore
(submitted by the Chair of Panel 2)

RECALLING the 2021 Recommendation by ICCAT to establish a rebuilding plan for Mediterranean albacore (Rec. 21-06);

NOTING the provisions of ICCAT Recommendation 11-13 and the need to rebuild the stock and to reduce the fishing mortality for stocks overfished and subject to overfishing;

CONSIDERING that the 2021 stock assessment of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) concluded that the Mediterranean albacore stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring, and recommended a level of catch of 2,500 t to meet the Convention management objective to allow the biomass to recover to the B_{MSY} level with 60% probability by 2034;

ACKNOWLEDGING that following the 2021 stock assessment for Mediterranean albacore, the SCRS noted in its advice that there is high uncertainty regarding the characterization of stock status, in particular for fishing mortality;

HIGHLIGHTING that, according to the latest scientific advice, and consistent with the precautionary approach, the SCRS recommends preventing an increase of catches;

CONSIDERING that to prevent an increase of the fishing effort and of catches it is important to ensure that the fishing capacity does not increase;

CONSIDERING that the obligation set out in paragraph 12 of *Recommendation by ICCAT replacing the Recommendation 13-04 and establishing a multi-annual recovery plan for Mediterranean swordfish* (Rec. 16-05) introducing a closure period from 1 October to 30 November for the longline fisheries targeting Mediterranean albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*), with the aim of protecting juveniles of Mediterranean swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*), should continue to be implemented by all CPCs;

ACKNOWLEDGING that paragraph 11 of ICCAT Recommendation 16-05 on Mediterranean swordfish foresees two alternative closure periods for this fishery and these closures also affect albacore fisheries in the Mediterranean;

ACKNOWLEDGING the socio-economic dimension of small-scale Mediterranean fisheries and the need for a gradual approach and flexibility in managing these fisheries;

RECALLING the importance that all fleets participating in Mediterranean albacore fisheries submit the required data (catch, effort and catch-at-size) on their fisheries for transmission to the SCRS;

CONSIDERING the outcome of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Mediterranean Albacore meeting held online on February 9-10, 2022;

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

1. Contracting Parties, Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities (hereafter referred to as CPCs) whose vessels have been actively fishing for albacore tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*) in the Mediterranean shall implement a 15-year rebuilding plan starting in 2022 and continuing through 2036 with the goal of achieving B_{MSY} with at least 60% probability.

2. For 2022 and 2023, a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) shall be set at 2,500 t for albacore tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*) in the Mediterranean.
3. For 2022 and 2023, the following quotas shall be allocated:

[...]

[...]

[...]

	<i>Quota</i>
<u>EU</u>	<u>2169.68</u>
<u>Egypt</u>	<u>177.27</u>
<u>Libya</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Morocco</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Syria</u>	<u>1.8</u>
<u>Türkiye¹</u>	<u>118.25</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>2500</u>

[...]

[...]

4. Each CPC shall limit the number of their fishing vessels authorised to fish for Mediterranean albacore to the number of vessels that were authorized to fish for Mediterranean albacore in 2017 under paragraph 28 of Recommendation 16-05; alternatively, in 2018 for CPCs which started to issue licenses for their fishing vessels in 2018 following the adoption of Recommendation 17-05. The CPCs shall communicate to the Commission, by 15 January 2022, the year of reference applying to them. CPCs, which used 2017 as the year of reference, may apply a tolerance of 10% to this capacity limit.
5. CPCs shall provide to the ICCAT Secretariat the list of all sport and recreational vessels authorized to catch albacore in the Mediterranean Sea, at least 15 days before the exercise of the activities. Vessels not introduced on this list shall not be authorized to catch Mediterranean albacore.
6. CPCs shall take the necessary measures to prohibit the catch and retention on board, transshipment or landing of more than three Mediterranean albacore specimens per vessel per day for sport and recreational fisheries.
7. The marketing of Mediterranean albacore caught in sport and recreational fishing shall be prohibited.
8. Without prejudice to the obligation set out in paragraph 12 of *Recommendation by ICCAT replacing the Recommendation 13-04 and establishing a multi-annual recovery plan for Mediterranean swordfish* (Rec. 16-05), Mediterranean albacore shall not be caught (either as a targeted species or as bycatch), retained on board, transhipped or landed during either:
- a) the period from 1 October to 30 November and during an additional period of one month between 15 February and 31 March;

¹ At the Ad Hoc Working Group on Mediterranean Albacore meeting held online on February 9-10, 2022, Türkiye did not agree with this figure and formally expressed its reservation.

b) or, alternatively, during the period from 1 January to 31 March each year.

The CPCs shall communicate to the Commission, by 15 January 2022, the closure periods of their choice.

9. CPCs shall monitor the Mediterranean albacore stock and shall submit to the Commission, at least two months before the Annual Meeting of the Commission, all relevant scientific information on catch, size and age at maturity, habitat, impact of longline fisheries in terms of catch composition, CPUE series, size distribution of the catches, and monthly estimation of spawner and recruit proportion in the catches. These data shall be submitted to the SCRS in the format required by ICCAT.
10. In 2023, the SCRS shall provide an updated assessment of the state of the stock on the basis of the most recent data available. It shall assess the effectiveness of this rebuilding plan and provide advice on possible amendments to the various measures within this plan. The SCRS shall advise the Commission on the appropriate characteristics of the fishing gear, the closure period in paragraph 9, as well as the minimum size to be implemented for Mediterranean albacore.
11. By the end of 2023, based on this scientific advice, ICCAT shall adopt, where necessary to comply with the management objectives, amendments to the management framework for Mediterranean albacore, including the revision of the catch limits and alternative management scenarios.
12. Notwithstanding the provisions of Article VIII, paragraph 2 of the Convention, CPCs are strongly encouraged to implement, in accordance with their regulatory procedures, this Recommendation as soon as possible and before the date of its entry into force.
13. This Recommendation repeals and replaces the *Recommendation by ICCAT to establish a rebuilding plan for Mediterranean albacore* (Rec. 21-06).