

**Cover letter to Draft Resolution by ICCAT on a pilot project
for short-term live storage of bluefin tuna**
(proposal submitted by Norway)

At the Annual Meeting in 2021 Norway presented a concept paper on short-term live storage of bluefin tuna. Panel 2 requested Norway to present a draft proposal on this concept to the Special Meeting of the Commission in 2022. Norway then proposed a draft to Panel 2, aiming to incorporate potential changes to the existing Recommendation 21-08 in a way that reflected short-term live storage of bluefin tuna. After the discussions of the draft in the Intersessional Meeting of Panel 2 (1-3 March 2022), Norway was asked to draft a separate draft recommendation on the short-term live storage of bluefin tuna to be circulated for comments among the CPCs. The Chair of Panel 2 offered to be the focal point of the correspondence, and a draft recommendation on short-term live storage of bluefin tuna, proposed by the Chair of Panel 2 in consultation with Norway, was circulated to all members of Panel 2 during the intersessional period.

Norway received comments from Japan, the EU and the United States during two rounds of correspondence, as well as comments from the Chair of Panel 2. These rounds of correspondence were very helpful for Norway as a means of moving the process forward. The input received did, however, make it clear that there are still several questions that need to be answered. In order to do so, we must gain more information and knowledge through research. Norway is, thus, of the opinion that proposing a recommendation on short-term live storage of bluefin tuna will be premature. Thus, we propose a resolution on short-term live storage of bluefin tuna. This resolution aims to provide guidelines for conducting such a fishery through a pilot project, which could provide answers to the questions we cannot answer as of today. The results from such a pilot project will be important in moving forward with regards to a potential recommendation on short-term live storage of bluefin tuna.

The draft resolution explains the purpose of the concept, limits the participation, determines which questions are to be answered in the pilot project, links the concept to the fishing plan and ensures that the CPCs send an evaluation/report to the Commission. As a part of the proposed resolution, Norway suggests one appendix which describes how the pilot project should be carried out. Adopting such a resolution will ensure that a pilot project on short term live storage of bluefin tuna is carried out in accordance with the ICCAT regulations and principles, and could be the foundation for the rules in a future recommendation on short-term storage of bluefin tuna.

The fish allocated to the pilot project will be deducted from the quota allocated to the CPC, and the industry will play an important role when it comes to the market aspect of the project. We believe that conducting such a pilot project on short-term live storage as proposed will have value for ICCAT in the future.

**Draft Resolution by ICCAT on a pilot project for the
short-term live storage of bluefin tuna**

(proposal submitted by Norway)

RECALLING that Norway during the 27th Regular Meeting of the Commission in 2021, presented a concept paper on short-term live storage of bluefin tuna;

ACKNOWLEDGING that at the 2021 Annual Meeting, Panel 2 requested Norway to present a draft proposal to the Special Meeting of the Commission in 2022 on short-term live storage of bluefin tuna;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that ICCAT has adopted the *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 19-04 amending Recommendation 18-02 establishing a multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean* (Rec. 21-08), the *Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 20-08 on the application of the eBCD system* (Rec.21-18) and the *Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 18-13 replacing Recommendation 11-20 on an ICCAT bluefin tuna catch documentation program* (Rec. 21-19);

NOTING an interest in exploring ways to (a) promote a more even distribution of bluefin tuna to prevent flooding of the market, (b) maintain the quality of bluefin tuna, and (c) maximize the utilization of bluefin tuna by preventing high quality food from being destroyed, while ensuring the integrity of existing ICCAT Recommendations for this species;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the use of short-term live storage of bluefin tuna may be an effective way to achieve these objectives and that establishing a pilot project using a precautionary approach can provide valuable scientific answers to how short-term live storage of bluefin tuna can be effectively carried out in the future;

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING that the research to be undertaken on the short-term live storage of bluefin tuna could result in the need for adjustments to relevant ICCAT measures or the development of new ones;

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

1. A pilot project for the short-term live storage of bluefin tuna is authorized.
2. Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities (hereinafter referred to as CPCs) whose vessels have been actively fishing for bluefin tuna north of 56°N, may conduct short-term live storage of bluefin tuna.
3. The objectives of short-term live storage of bluefin tuna are to maintain a high-quality product and to ensure that distribution of the fish can occur in a way that does not flood the market.
4. Research conducted as part of the pilot project should aim to provide answers to key questions related to short-term live storage of bluefin tuna, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - fish behavior
 - estimate the weight of bluefin tuna at the time of catch and caging
 - whether feeding is needed to ensure animal health and, if so, how to avoid fattening the bluefin tuna
 - extent of mortality and causes
 - meat quality
 - how to ensure traceability is ensured consistent with the requirements of the BCD program, including exploring the use of tagging
 - harvesting processes
 - marketing questions

5. CPCs who wish to engage in the pilot project on short-term live storage of bluefin tuna should identify and describe the activity in their annual fishing plan, in accordance with the multi-annual conservation and management plan for eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna (Rec. 21-08, paragraph 12). The allocation from the CPCs national quota to the pilot project should be specified in the annual fishing plan and should be on a limited scale and approved by Panel 2. The fishing plan should be analysed, and, as appropriate, endorsed by Panel 2 intersessionally (Rec. 21-08, paragraph 13).
6. CPCs who wish to engage in the pilot project on short-term live storage of bluefin tuna should do so in accordance with this resolution, including **Appendix 1** and **Appendix 2**.
7. The pilot project will be assessed by the Commission within five years to determine whether and how the activity should continue beyond the pilot project stage. CPCs participating in the pilot project will submit a report on the results of the project for consideration by the SCRS, and the Commission no later than 2027. The report should, inter alia, clearly identify any difficulties in carrying out the pilot project, including if there are provisions of the appendices or relevant ICCAT recommendations that cannot be implemented.

Definitions

1. For purposes of the short-term live storage pilot project:
 - a) "auxiliary vessel" means any vessel used to transport dead bluefin tuna (not processed) from a storage cage, a purse seine vessel to a designated port, and/or to a processing vessel.
 - b) "eBCD" means an electronic bluefin catch document.
 - c) "caging" means the relocation of live bluefin tuna from the transport cage to the storage cage.
 - d) "catching vessel" means a vessel used for the purposes of the commercial capture of bluefin tuna resources.
 - e) "control camera" means a stereoscopic camera and/or conventional video camera for the purpose of the controls foreseen in this Appendix.
 - f) "harvesting" means the killing of bluefin tuna taken from a storage cage.
 - g) "fishing vessel" means any powered vessel used for the purposes of the commercial exploitation of bluefin tuna resources, including catching vessels, fish processing vessels, support vessels, towing vessels, vessels engaged in transshipment, and transport vessels equipped for the transportation of tuna products and auxiliary vessels, except container vessels.
 - h) "short-term live storage" means keeping bluefin tuna in a storage cage for a limited time without fattening them or increasing their total biomass.
 - i) "stereoscopic camera" means a camera with two or more lenses, with a separate image sensor or film frame for each lens, enabling the taking of three-dimensional images for the purpose of measuring the length of the fish and assisting in refining the number and weight of bluefin tuna.
 - j) "storage cage" means cages that are used for the short-term live storage of bluefin tuna.
 - k) "transport cage" means cages that are used for the transport of live tuna to the storage cage.
 - l) "transfer operations" means:
 - a) any transfer of live bluefin tuna from the catching vessel's net to the transport cage;
 - b) any transfer of live bluefin tuna from a transport cage to a storage cage;
 - c) any transfer of live bluefin tuna from a storage cage to a transport cage.

Authorization

2. Any CPC that takes part in the pilot project for the short-term live storage, will designate a competent authority, hereafter referred to as the "CPC competent authority", that will be responsible for coordinating the collection and verification of information for the control of transfers, caging, harvesting and related transports of bluefin tuna conducted under its jurisdiction.
3. Before the start of a transfer operation, caging or harvesting, the Master of the catching vessel or its representative, or the representative of the storage cage, will send a prior notification to the CPC competent authority indicating the following, as applicable, depending on the operation:
 - the number of individuals and the estimated weight of the bluefin tuna in kg;
 - the name of the catching vessel or storage cage, with their respective ICCAT record number;
 - the date and the location of the catch, caging or harvesting;

- the date and estimated time of transfer, caging or harvesting;
 - the eBCD number concerned, as confirmed and validated by the CPC competent authority;
 - details of auxiliary vessels involved in the operation;
 - estimated quantities to be transferred, caged or harvested in number of individuals and kg.
4. A transfer, caging or harvesting operation will not be authorized by the CPC competent authority if, on the receipt of the prior notification, it considers that:
- the catching vessel does not have a valid authorization to fish for bluefin tuna;
 - the number and weight of fish have not been duly reported by the master of the catching vessel or its representative, or the representative of the storage cage;
 - the catching vessel that has caught the fish does not have sufficient quota;
 - the storage cage of destination is not reported as active;
 - the fish to be caged have not been duly reported by the catching vessel, and have not been taken into account for the calculation of any quota uptake that may be applicable;
 - the ICCAT regional observer is not present and no derogation is applicable;
 - relevant activities have not been appropriately recorded in the eBCD system.

Unique numbers and catching vessels assigned to cages

5. All cages used in transfer, caging and harvesting operations and associated transports will be numbered in accordance with the unique numbering system referred to in the multi-annual conservation and management plan for eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna (Rec. 21-08, paragraph 147-150).
6. To facilitate traceability, a storage cage will only contain bluefin tuna from one catching vessel. The CPC competent authority may authorize a vessel to utilize an empty cage which has previously been used by a different vessel.

If the bluefin tuna has been tagged, a storage cage can contain bluefin tuna from more than one catching vessel.

Control measures

7. Before the start of a transfer operation, caging or harvesting, the master of the catching vessel or its representative, or the representative of the storage cage, will report their activities in their electronic fishing logbook and forward the information to the CPC competent authority on a daily basis.
8. All transfer and caging operations will be monitored by control camera in the water, in accordance with the minimum standards and procedures set out in **Appendix 2**, to determine the number of individuals of bluefin tuna. All caging operations should be recorded using both conventional and stereoscopic cameras in the water, and all video footage should comply with the minimum standards set out in **Appendix 2**.
9. A copy of the relevant video records will be provided to the regional observer and to the CPC competent authority immediately. Copies of the video records should be provided by the CPC competent authority to the SCRS upon request. The SCRS should keep the confidentiality of commercial activities.
10. The CPC competent authority will determine the number and weight of the bluefin tuna being caged by analyzing the video footage of each caging operation. To carry out this analysis, the authorities will follow the relevant standards and procedures for stereoscopic camera systems set out in the applicable annexes, including Annex 9, of the *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 19-04 Amending Recommendation establishing a multi-annual conservation and management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean* (Rec. 21-08).

11. The CPC will ensure 100% observer coverage from the ICCAT Regional Observer Programme referred to in *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 19-04 Amending Recommendation establishing a multi-annual conservation and management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean* (Rec. 21-08 and any successor recommendations) during all catching, transfer, caging and harvesting operations.
12. Notwithstanding the above, when, for reasons of force majeure (e.g., pandemic) duly notified to ICCAT, the deployment of a regional observer is not possible, the vessel or storage cage may operate without the observer. In such cases, CPCs will prioritize such vessels and storage cages for control and inspection. In addition, CPCs will implement a set of appropriate alternative measures aimed at achieving the objectives of the regional observer programme, including, where possible, deploying either a national inspector or a national observer to act in locum of the regional observer. The CPC concerned will send all details of the alternative measures to the Secretariat. The Secretariat will compile and circulate all the information received on the implementation of these procedures to the Commission. Such alternative measures and the actions taken will be examined by the Compliance Committee during each annual meeting.
13. By way of derogation from paragraph 11 harvesting from each storage cage up to 1000 kg per day and up to a maximum of 50 tons per storage cage per year to supply the fresh bluefin tuna market, may be authorized by the relevant CPC provided that an authorized inspector from the storage cage CPC is onsite for 100% of such harvests, and controls the entire operation. The authorized inspector will also validate the harvested quantities in the eBCD system. In this case, the regional observer's signature is not required in the harvest section of the eBCD.
14. At arrival of the transport cage in the vicinity of the storage cage, the storage cage CPC competent authority will ensure that:
 - a) if a regional observer is not onboard the catching vessel concerned, the vessel should maintain at a distance of minimum 1 nautical mile from any facility until the storage cage CPC competent authority is physically present; and
 - b) the position and activity of the relevant towing vessels is monitored at all times.
 - c) No caging operation will start:
 - before it has been duly authorized by the storage cage CPC competent authority;
 - without the presence of the storage cage CPC competent authority and the ICCAT regional observer;
 - before the catch and live trade sections of the eBCD have been completed and validated by the catching flag or storage cage CPC competent authority(ies).
15. After transfer of the bluefin tuna from the towing cage to the storage cage, the storage cage CPC control authority will ensure that storage cages containing bluefin tuna are sealed at all times following the sealing operations procedure contained in Annex 14 of Rec. 21-08. Unsealing will only be possible in the presence of the storage cage CPC competent authority and following its authorization. The storage cage CPC control authority should establish protocols for the sealing of storage cages, ensuring the use of official seals and that these seals are placed in such a way that they prevent the opening of doors without the seals being broken.
16. The short-term live storage CPC competent authority will carry out random controls in storage cages under their jurisdiction (Rec. 21-08, paragraphs 207-214). The CPC will describe the measures for random controls in their annual fishing plan (Rec. 21-08, paragraph 12).
17. Each transfer, caging and harvesting operation will be recorded in the eBCD system to ensure appropriate traceability.

18. Notwithstanding the above, all vessels used to transport live bluefin tuna will, irrespective of their length, install and operate a VMS, in accordance with Rec. 18-10, and transmit messages at least once every hour

Dead and dying fish

19. During transfer and caging operations, and during the period the bluefin tuna is stored in the storage cages, sick, injured, dead and dying fish will be removed and those not yet dead will be killed. These fish will be entered into the eBCD system and may be traded.

Enforcement

20. CPCs will take appropriate enforcement measures with respect to the master of the catching vessel or its representative, or the representative of the storage cage, where it has been established, in accordance with its law, that the fishing vessel or storage cage flying its flag does not comply with the provisions of this appendix.
21. The measures will be commensurate with the gravity of the offence and in accordance with the pertinent provisions of national law in such a way as to make sure that they effectively deprive those responsible of the economic benefit derived from their infringement without prejudice to the exercise of their profession. Those sanctions [will][should] also be capable of producing results proportionate to the seriousness of such infringement, thereby effectively discouraging further offences of the same kind.

**Minimum standards for video recording procedures
applicable to transfer, caging and/or release operations**

1. Each storage cage CPC concerned should ensure that the following procedures apply to all video recordings of transfer, caging and/or release operations referred to in this Resolution:
 - a) At the beginning and/or the end of each video, where requested, the ICCAT transfer or caging authorization number or release order should be displayed;
 - b) The time and the date of the video should be continuously displayed throughout each video record;
 - c) The video record should be continuous without any interruptions and cuts, and cover the entire transfer, caging and/or release operation;
 - d) Before the start of the transfer, caging and/or release operation, the video record should include the opening and closing of the net/door and, for transfers and caging operations, show whether the receiving and donor cage(s) already contain bluefin tuna;
 - e) The video record should be of sufficient quality to determine the number and, where appropriate the weight, of bluefin tuna being transferred, caged and/or released;
 - f) The original video record should be kept on board the donor vessel, or by the storage cage operator where appropriate, during their entire period of authorization to operate;
 - g) The electronic storage device containing the original video record should be immediately provided to the ICCAT regional and/or CPC national observer after the end of the transfer, caging and/or release operation. The ICCAT regional observer and/or CPC observer should immediately initialize it to avoid any further manipulation.
2. Each flag and storage cage CPC concerned should establish the necessary measures to avoid any replacement, edition or manipulation of the original video records.