

COLLABORATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

(ICCAT Secretariat)

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)

In 2016, ICCAT signed guidelines for cooperation with ACAP. This cooperation is a non-binding agreement that covers such issues as participation as observers in each other's meetings, as well as consultation, cooperation and collaboration on issues of common concern. The Guidelines for the Cooperation between ICCAT and ACAP have been renewed in September 2022 for another 6-year period.

Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA)

The Secretariat has prepared eight new entries for the Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA-ProQuest) database of the papers published in the most recent issues of the ICCAT Collective Volume of Scientific Papers.

Coordinating Working Group on Fishery Statistics (CWP)

The Secretariat has maintained a close collaboration with the FAO's Coordinating Working Party (CWP) by participating in meetings and at the technical level on the solution of various data issues (data corrections, coding systems, application of fisheries harmonization standards and concepts, data exchange, etc.). In 2022, the ICCAT Secretariat attended the 29th Intersessional Meeting of the CWP Fisheries Subject Group online (CWP-FS, 20-23 June 2022). ICCAT reported the 2021-2022 progress of the activities relevant to CWP on fisheries statistics of tuna and tuna like species and reiterated its commitment as partner of FAO-CWP. During the meeting the 5 t-RFMOs have informed the CWP on the progress of their online data systems (ICCAT presented the IOMS), focusing mostly on the development status, technical specifications, and main mid/long term goals. All the five t-RFMOs have under development or are planning online data systems. Overall, they have differences in these three aspects but with overall similar objectives. It was noted that the sharing of experiences and knowledge among the t-RFMOs can reduce those differences in the long run.

Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS)

ICCAT is a partner of the FAO/FIRMS that provides access to information on the global monitoring and management of fishery marine resources. As such the Secretariat provides regular updates for the stock status of ICCAT species (<http://firms.fao.org/firms/en>) assessed by the SCRS. The Secretariat attended the 12th Steering Committee meeting of the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS), held online on 18-21 October 2021. The progress on the new FIRMS information system developed under the BlueBRIDGE project was reviewed, including the Global Tuna Atlas (GTA) and the Global Record of Stocks and Fisheries. Under the ambit of the FIRMS strategic plan for the 2020-30 decade (FAO-FIRMS Steering Committee 11th session meeting report: www.fao.org/3/ca5247en/ca5247en.pdf), the ICCAT Secretariat has participated in the second Technical Virtual Meeting of the GTA system (online, 9 February 2022) aimed at the fine-tuning and launch of the official release ([release news](#)). As of today, the GTA system contains the ICCAT public statistical information (Task 1 nominal catches and Task 2 catch & effort) currently published in the ICCAT website. Preliminary responses from partners including ICCAT Secretariat, noted limitations on time and staff to address FIRMS requirements, recommending streamlining and standardize the overall transfer of data. It was further noticed that ICCAT is in the process of updating its Data Confidentiality Policy, and that future data submission will follow those policy requirements. Responses from FIRMS partners will be considered in the strategic plan draft that will be reviewed at the next meeting.

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

ICCAT and ICES expressed their willingness in 2018 to strengthen cooperation in the areas of bycatch, sharks, and stock assessment issues, working through ICCAT's Sub-committee on Ecosystems and Bycatch, the Shark Species Group, and the WGSAM.

In 2021/2022 SCRS scientists and the Secretariat participated actively in the Northeastern Atlantic Porbeagle ICES-ICCAT Stock Assessment. The assessment included several meetings including data preparatory, assessment review, and management recommendation discussions. Both ICCAT and ICES agreed with the assessment results and stock status indicating that the northeastern porbeagle stock is overfished but not subject to overfishing. However, for the management advice recommendation(s) each party followed its internal procedures.

The SCRS recommended continuing the scientific collaboration with ICES but agreed that improved coordination between ICES and ICCAT would be desirable. To that end, it recommended that the Secretariat work with the ICES Secretariat in drafting a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations.

FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project

At the 2019 ICCAT Commission meeting, it was decided to continue to cooperate with this programme provided that there are benefits to ICCAT. To this end, in 2021, the ICCAT Secretariat worked together with the coordination team of the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project and ABNJ Project aiming drafting proposals to be considered at the Phase II of the project.

Four proposals were finalised and submitted to FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project and ABNJ Project (Phase II). These will support several activities and have direct benefits to ICCAT including: i) improving compliance with conservation and management measures; ii) enhancing ICCAT's Integrated Online Management System (IOMS); iii) testing ecosystem-based indicators and management policies; and, iv) supporting harmonization of commonalities shared by t-RFMOs (e.g., observer or Electronic Monitoring Systems data, Harvest Strategies /Management Strategic Evaluation, FAD, bycatch, etc.).

The Secretariat is committing a total of \$US 5,165,025 over a 5-year period for in-kind co-finance for ABNJ Tuna II, which is in line with the commitment made for ABNJ Tuna I. The total amount to be funded by GEF is of \$US 1,503,030. More details were provided in document Cooperation with FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project (Phase II) [PLE-108/2021].

The formal launch of this ABNJ tuna II took place at the inception workshop which was held between 7 and 9 November 2022.

FAO-PSMA

The ICCAT VMS Manager/Technical officer attended the FAO-Regional Coordination Meeting for Africa, Near East and the Mediterranean Sean on the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) – see document on “Meetings at which ICCAT was represented from January 2022 to October 2022” [STF-201/2022, Annex 1] in the context of possible future cooperation with the FAO on PSMA training courses to include the ICCAT module, using the funds provided by ABNJ (see above). It is hoped that cooperation with FAO on this issue, as well as with ICCAT Contracting Parties, can commence once the Letter of Agreement between ICCAT and ABNJ has been finalised and signed.

General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)

Following the contacts established in 2019 aiming to further strengthen the cooperation between the GFCM and ICCAT, the two Secretariats worked on a draft text of a Memorandum of Understanding, mainly relating to issues of common interest. That draft text was submitted to the 2019 Commission, which adopted it with amendments. This adopted text was provided to the GFCM, which later notified the Secretariat of some legal *language* issues. This feedback from the GFCM was circulated to ICCAT CPCs in 2020 and some CPCs expressed concerns with the changes in the language. Those CPCs suggested that alternative avenues be explored in the event that a text could not be agreed for a formal MoU. To this end, the two Secretariats are working on a draft letter of cooperation in order to identify the lines of cooperation, which is available as **Appendix 1** of this document (PLE-106-APP-1).

In 2021 ICCAT Secretariat attended the CoC - Working Group on VMS and related controls system (WGVMS), held online 20 May 2021. GFCM proposed a technical cooperation with ICCAT on Regional VMS Systems, via a pilot VMS, aiming to learn from ICCAT VMS' experience. In the absence of a formal operational mechanism of cooperation between the two organisations, during the 2021 14th Meeting of the Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM) Working Group it was agreed to share the ICCAT experience with the GFCM, as far as non-confidential information is concerned. As a result, a set of information of the VMS was shared with the GFCM. In 2022, The ICCAT VMS Manager attended the Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (WGIUU), Working Group on VMS and related controls system (WGVMS) and Compliance Committee (CoC) and the Executive Secretary attended the Workshop of the GFCM-MAVA project towards a region-wide legal framework for the conservation of Mediterranean living marine resources and ecosystems (GFCM-Lex): The GFCM-Lex, piloted in three countries in the Mediterranean Sea, aims to facilitate access to relevant national legislation on the management and conservation of marine living resources and ecosystems aims (see Annex 1 of the "2022 Administrative Report" [STF-201/2022] for more details).

Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC)

In 2019, the two Secretariats worked on a draft text of a Memorandum of Understanding, mainly on issues of common interest. That draft text was submitted to the 2019 Commission, which adopted it with amendments. This adopted text was provided to the WECAFC which later notified the Secretariat of some legal language issues. This feedback regarding language changes from the WECAFC was circulated to ICCAT CPCs in 2020 and some CPCs had concerns with these new changes. Those CPCs wished the text to be re-tabled at the Commission and suggested that alternative avenues be explored in the event that a text could not be agreed for a formal MoU. To this end, the two Secretariats are working on a draft letter of cooperation in order to identify the lines of cooperation, which is available as **Appendix 2** of this document [PLE-106-APP-2).

In late 2021, following the engagement of the Secretariat and SCRS shark experts on the first draft of the Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks and Rays (RPOA) in the WECAFC Area, a Task Force was established to deliver the final WECAFC Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks and Rays in the WECAFC Area. In 2022 the ICCAT Secretariat and two SCRS shark experts supported WECAFC in this regard.

Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention (IAC)

In 2019 the Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention (IAC) informed the Secretariat that IAC Parties had adopted that year a Resolution (CIT-COP9-2019-R2) on the Conservation of Northwest Atlantic Leatherbacks, which includes a recommendation to the IAC Secretariat to resume dialogue with the ICCAT Secretariat and Parties, to establish a memorandum of understanding to improve the cooperation, and provide technical support to the Parties through implementation of the relevant resolutions of both organizations. IAC informed the Commission in 2019 in Palma of this intention to have an MoU.

In 2021, the Commission agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, which was done on 21 March 2022.

ISSF

The International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) continued providing the ICCAT Secretariat with detailed catches (by vessel trip, species, and commercial size category) for all purchases made ISSF participating companies. These correspond to unloading of Atlantic catches from tropical tunas (bigeye, yellowfin, and skipjack) and albacore to canneries around the world. In 2021, the ISSF financed a short-term Project aiming to treat, validate and store in a relational database the information received by ICCAT between 2010 and 2020 (about 1,400 quarterly reports). The ICCAT Secretariat and ISSF are discussing further developments of this project, aiming to support the best scientific advice.

Tuna Compliance Network (TCN)

No in-person meeting of the Tuna Compliance Network could be held in 2022. However, further online meetings between the officers responsible for compliance and the network coordinator and consultant were held to advance the Compliance Assessment Study Report, financed by FAO and carried out by an external consultant. The report has now been finalised and has been made available as the “Tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) Compliance Assessment – A Comparative Assessment” [COC-316/2022].

The network had established a sub-group with other non-tuna RFMOs for exchanging information on IUU lists which continues to be operative, but to date no easy way to incorporate the information into each RFMOs list has been developed, although ideas continue to be exchanged. The cross listing of IUU lists has become a major task and creates similar challenges for all RFMOs involved in cross listing. A feasibility study for a more centralised IUU list has been carried out and is available as document “Advancing RFMO IUU Vessel List Utility” [PWG-414/2022].

Sargasso Sea Commission

The Sargasso Sea Commission contacted the Secretariat to express their interest to cooperate with ICCAT, and in 2022 presented to the SCRS some proposed areas of cooperation. These areas shall be further discussed by the Sub-Committee on Ecosystems and Bycatch and the SCRS in 2023, before the two Secretariats work together on a proposal of a MoU to be submitted to the Commission.