

OPENING ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD OF PORTUGAL

President of the Municipal Chamber of Loulé, Vítor Aleixo
Chair of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
Chair of the Regional Coordination and Development Commission of the Algarve, José Apolinário
Delegates,
Participants

It is with great satisfaction that Portugal, on behalf of the European Union, is hosting, over the course of this week, the 23rd Annual Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, and extends its thanks to the European Commission for all its support.

I am very pleased to welcome you to this beautiful place, located in the Algarve region, where fishing is one of the dominant activities, along with tourism.

The geomorphological characteristics of this region can certainly account for how important the fisheries sector is today; its main components being capture, aquaculture and the fish processing industry.

Allow me to point out that the Algarve region accounts for, on average, close to 22% of the value of the fresh fish landed nationally.

It is also the region with the largest number of different types of aquaculture businesses, such as nurseries (bottom), ponds and floating structures (longlines and cages). The latter include two tuna structures (traps and farm), which have a special interest in the decisions that result from this meeting.

Given that ICCAT has 52 Contracting Parties, with interests that sometimes differ, I sincerely hope that this forum can build the best consensus for adoption of the regulatory measures under discussion.

Only this way will we manage to achieve suitable results for sustainable management, environmentally, economically and socially, of the resources regulated by this Regional Fisheries Management Organisation, in particular, highly migratory fish.

Finally, I would like to highlight the positive contribution of some stocks, in particular, bigeye and bluefin tuna, to the economic and social balance of the national coastal communities, in particular, the Portuguese outermost regions that carry out sustainable fishing, which is very selective and seasonal, using small-scale vessels.

The fisheries sector is fundamental in the sustainable development of our country. Not only does fish play an essential role in a balanced and healthy diet, with a prominent place in our prized Mediterranean diet, fish is also considered to be key in cohesive socio-economic growth.

With increasing knowledge and innovation, we seek to, and will, continue to foster and promote the fisheries sector as well as, of course, the people who devote their lives to this sector.

I wish you all a very good and fruitful meeting.