



International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)

Annual Meeting, November 13–20, 2023

This Position Statement outlines issues that we urge the ICCAT Commission to act on at its upcoming meeting.



COMPLIANCE PROCESSES

2023 Asks

- Adopt a workplan for the Compliance Committee to develop audit points for ICCAT management measures, such as those developed for sharks in [Rec. 18-06](#).
- Use the [schedule of compliance issues and corresponding actions](#), adopted in 2022, for the 2023 review of CPC compliance.
- Adopt procedures to identify and address non-compliance with TAC allocations.

Background

A strong and transparent compliance process improves fisheries management by holding regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) members accountable. ICCAT has one of the best designed and most transparent compliance assessment processes of the five tuna RFMOs, but it can continue to be strengthened. ISSF and Pew Charitable Trusts have recommendations to improve RFMO compliance processes in workshop reports: [2020 report](#), [2021 report](#), [2022 report](#).

Priorities to Progress

- Review FAD data reporting in-depth and take corrective measures, per the schedule of compliance issues and corresponding actions document, as needed.
- Review reporting by ICCAT Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities (CPCs) of live and dead discards of sharks, particularly shortfin mako, and take corrective actions as needed.

[RFMO Compliance Information & Resources](#)



TUNA STOCK CONSERVATION

2023 Asks

- Adopt a new recommendation for tropical tuna conservation and management that ensures bigeye and yellowfin stocks are maintained at sustainable levels in accordance with the ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) advice and fully allocates the total allowable catch (TAC) between CPCs, especially for yellowfin.
- Request the SCRS to carry out a yellowfin assessment in 2024.

Background

The yellowfin TAC has been exceeded every year but one since it came into effect in 2012. In 2022, catches were almost 35% above the TAC. Yellowfin was last assessed in 2019 with a 43% probability of being subject to overfishing. It is important to update the status of this stock as it may have worsened. In addition, the yellowfin TAC is not allocated by CPC or gear which makes it impossible to identify non-compliance by individual CPCs.

Priorities to Progress

- Plan for an updated bigeye assessment in 2025.

[Tuna Conservation Information & Resources](#)



FAD MANAGEMENT

2023 Asks

- Clarify that fish aggregating devices (FADs) must be fully non-entangling, i.e., without any netting or meshed materials.
- Adopt the definition of “biodegradable” categories consistent with those of IATTC and WCPFC and establish a timeline for transition to biodegradable FADs similar to what was agreed in the IATTC.

Background

In the past few years, the difficult discussions on allocation surrounding the tropical tuna measure have put aside important actions for improved FAD management, such as FAD design, marking, recovery, activation/deactivation rules, data use for science, etc. It is important for ICCAT to bring its FAD management measures in line with existing best practice by adopting new policies and needed improvements to its FAD measures.

Priorities to Progress

- Develop and adopt an effective FAD marking scheme for both FAD structure and geolocating buoy.

- Develop and adopt clear rules for FAD ownership and for FAD buoy activation and deactivation.
- Develop and adopt a requirement for provision to ICCAT of near real-time FAD position and acoustic biomass records data for scientific use with a maximum time lag of 90 days to protect confidentiality.
- Develop and adopt a policy for FAD-recovery.

[FAD Management Information & Resources](#)



ELECTRONIC MONITORING AND REPORTING & OBSERVER COVERAGE

2023 Asks

- Adopt the Electronic Monitoring (EM) Minimum Standards developed by the Electronic Monitoring Systems Working Group in consultation with SCRS.
- Direct the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures to develop an ICCAT Regional Observer Program (per Rec. 22-01) for recommendation to the Commission in 2024.

Background

Comprehensive observer coverage is critical to effective fisheries management, compliance monitoring, and independent verification of catch, effort, species composition and bycatch. 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic) is feasible and necessary. ICCAT's minimum 10% observer coverage requirement for longline vessels fishing for tropical tunas is still too low for bycatch estimates to be reliable and EM can help increase coverage. In 2022 and 2023, the SCRS and the Electronic Monitoring Systems Working Group have drafted minimum EM standards for both purse seine and longline fisheries.

Priorities to Progress

- Adopt measures to increase observer coverage (human and/or electronic) on longline vessels from 10% as progress toward 100% coverage in industrial tuna fisheries, including support vessels and all vessels engaged in at sea transshipment, by 2024.

[Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Information & Resources](#)



TRANSSHIPMENT REGULATION

2023 Asks

- Adopt revisions to Rec. 21-15 to strengthen the regulation of at-sea transshipment in line with [best practice standards](#), including requiring:
 - near real-time electronic reporting (not longer than 24 hours after the event) for all transshipment activity;
 - that carrier vessels only to be flagged to CPCs; and
 - that AIS data are reported in addition to required VMS data.

Background

If not well-managed, transshipment at-sea can be a conduit for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fish to enter the supply chain. ICCAT strengthened its transshipment regulations in 2021, but they should be further improved to be aligned with [best practice standards](#).

Priorities to Progress

- Develop guidelines, including criteria, for flag CPC authorization of at-sea transshipment and a review process.

[Transshipment Regulation Information & Resources](#)



EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES (HARVEST STRATEGIES)

2023 Asks

- Adopt the harvest strategy for western Atlantic skipjack recommended by SCRS.

Background

Management Procedures (MPs) provide a modern mechanism for fisheries management that accounts for uncertainty in an explicit and precautionary manner. ICCAT has successfully adopted MPs for northern albacore and Atlantic bluefin tuna and SCRS with input from Panel 1 has developed an MP for western skipjack. MP development involves detailed work by scientists, managers, and stakeholders. As many ICCAT stocks do not have an MP yet, it is important to finalize and adopt those that are well developed and prioritize future MP work for other stocks.

Priorities to Progress

- Accelerate development of MPs for all tropical tuna stocks.



BYCATCH MITIGATION & SHARK PROTECTIONS

2023 Asks

- Require all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached without exceptions.
- Reduce the TACs for both blue shark stocks to levels that will ensure a high probability that the stocks will remain in a healthy state in line with SCRS advice, and allocate the TACs by CPC.
- Implement the SCRS advice on catch limits for shortfin mako stocks.
- Request the SCRS to review science-based mitigation techniques for seabird bycatch so as to align Rec. [11-09] to best practice in 2024.

Background

In 2023, the SCRS assessed the status of blue shark stocks and advised that the TACs for the two stocks need to be reduced in order to maintain them in the "green quadrant of the Kobe Plot." The TACs are not allocated by CPC which makes it impossible to identify non-compliance by individual CPCs. For shortfin mako, the SCRS recommended a no-retention measure without exemptions for the northern stock, and a maximum catch limit of 2,000 tonnes for the southern stock. SCRS also noted that the reporting of dead discards and live releases needs to be improved considerably.

The current management measure for seabirds (Rec. [11-09]) is outdated and no longer aligned with best-practice mitigation techniques, such as those of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP).

[Bycatch Reduction Information & Resources](#)



CAPACITY

Background

Experts agree that there is overcapacity, too many vessels, in the global tuna fleets. Fishing fleet overcapacity increases pressure to weaken management measures, and eventually it leads to stock overexploitation.

Priorities to Progress

- Establish limited entry through closed vessel registries and develop a common currency to measure fishing capacity, such as cubic meters of well volume.



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