

Cover sheet to accompany new proposals

(proposal submitted by the European Union)

Title of the Proposed Draft Recommendation/Resolution: *Draft Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 22-08 establishing a multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean*

Title of currently in force recommendation(s) or resolution(s) addressing the same or related issues: *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 21-08 establishing a multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean (Rec. 22-08)*

1. Does it create new **reporting obligation(s)** for CPCs? Yes No

Brief description of new reporting obligation(s):

2. Does it require additional input or **work by the SCRS**? Yes No

Is this work already included in the current SCRS workplan Yes No

Brief description of new scientific work required (i.e. stock assessment, analysis, external consultant):

3. Does it involve the creation of a **new working group or intersessional process**? Yes No

4. Does it require a new **programme or additional activities to be managed by the Secretariat**?

Yes No

Brief description of new Secretariat work required:

This measure aligns to the current bluefin tuna reporting requirements.

5. What is the proposed timeframe for implementation, and are there different specific timeframes for certain CPCs, fisheries, regions, etc.:

Entry into force 2025.

6. Is there any other relevant information regarding the resource and workload implications of the proposal:

**Explanatory note on Draft Recommendation by ICCAT amending the
Recommendation 22-08 establishing a multi-annual management plan
for bluefin tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean**

(proposal submitted by the European Union)

Paragraph 33 of *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 21-08 establishing a multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean (Rec. 22-08)* establishes the minimum size for bluefin tuna caught in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Paragraph 34 establishes derogations from this measure applicable to, among others, small-scale coastal fleet subject to specific conditions laid down in Annex 1 to the same Recommendation. For small-scale coastal fleet fishery for fresh fish by baitboats, longliners and handliners in the Mediterranean, the derogation granted through paragraph 34(b) defines the conditions that allow each CPC to allocate no more than 2% of its quota among its small-scale coastal vessels in the Mediterranean (paragraph 3 of **Annex 1**).

The scientific stock assessments of eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna indicate a significant recovery in the spawning stock biomass (SSB) since the implementation of the 2006 Recovery Plan (*Recommendation by ICCAT to establish a multi-annual recovery plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (Rec. 06-05)*). Following a period of decline from the 1970s, all three stock assessment models demonstrate a strong upward trend in SSB from the late 2000s. Such a trend suggests a successful recovery effort. Furthermore, fishing mortality rates have seen a substantial decrease since 2006 and remain below target levels, contributing to the positive trends in stock health.

The positive trends in stock status have been observed in small scale coastal fishery in the Mediterranean which encounter more often fish below the minimum size.

The number of vessels that can be licensed under this derogation granted by paragraph 34(b) is limited to the number of vessels licensed in 2008. This limitation to the number of small vessels that can be licensed does no longer seem adequate considering the current stocks status, as compared to the one in 2008 when the recovery had just been agreed.

Furthermore, the bycatch of small fish in the Gulf of Lion is an inevitability of that specific region, where the high concentration of undersized fish is well documented. This is demonstrated by the sampling dataset of 513 fish from the Gulf of Lion longline fishery between 2017 and 2019 (April, August, September, and October) which shows that most 115 cm fish will be lighter than 30 kg and most 30 kg fish will be larger than 115 cm. The dataset shows that fish between 114 cm and 116 cm have a median weight of 28.1 kg, most of them weighing less than 30 kg. Fish weighing between 29 and 31 kg have a median of 117 cm and most of them are larger than 115 cm.

In order to allow the increase of small-scale coastal vessel licensed to operate in the Gulf of Lion, CPCs should therefore be allowed to allocate a higher percentage of up to 4% of their quota for bluefin tuna below the minimum size among its small-scale coastal vessels fishing in the Mediterranean.

This minimal alteration in size composition is unlikely to have a discernible impact on the population dynamics of bluefin tuna and would not be detectable within the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) framework, given that Mediterranean small-scale fisheries are not included in the main fisheries defined within the MSE model.

Furthermore, such increase will demonstrate that the coastal communities reliant on such fisheries and dependent on bluefin tuna stock benefit from the stock recovery efforts.

Failure to adopt such an increase prevents small-scale operators from engaging in a fishery which is vital for the local economy.

Based on the reasons outlined above, the EU proposes to amend **Annex 1** to increase the percentage for the derogation, as established in paragraph 34(b), from 2% up to 4% for the specific region of the Gulf of Lion. This increase would permit a derogation from the prohibition on catching, retaining on board, transshipping, transferring, landing, transporting, storing, selling, displaying, or offering for sale bluefin tuna weighing less than 30 kg or with a fork length of less than 115 cm. Additionally, the EU proposes further amending **Annex 1** to allow for an increase of up to 10% in the registry of small-scale coastal vessels in that region, as compared to the number of vessels recorded in 2008.

**Draft Recommendation by ICCAT amending the
Recommendation 22-08 establishing a multi-annual management plan
for bluefin tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean**

(proposal submitted by the European Union)

Annex 1 to the ICCAT Recommendation 22-08 is amended as follows:

Annex 1

Specific conditions applying to the catching vessels fishing under paragraph 34

1. CPCs shall limit:

- The maximum number of its baitboats and trolling boats authorized to fish actively for bluefin tuna to the number of the vessels participating in directed fishery for bluefin tuna in 2006;
- The maximum number of its small-scale coastal vessels authorized to fish actively bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean is limited to the number of its vessels participating in the fishery for bluefin tuna in 2008; with the exception of small-scale coastal vessels operating in the Gulf of Lion, whose number may increase by up to 10% compared to the number of vessels recorded in 2008;
- The maximum number of its catching vessels authorized to fish actively for bluefin tuna in the Adriatic to the number of the vessels participating in the fishery for bluefin tuna in 2008. Each CPC shall allocate individual quotas to the concerned vessels.

CPCs shall issue specific authorizations to the vessels referred to in paragraph 1 of this **Annex**. Such vessels shall be indicated in the list of catching vessels referred to in paragraph 48 a) of this Recommendation, where the conditions for changes shall also apply.

2. Each CPC may allocate no more than 7% of its quota for bluefin tuna among its baitboats and trolling boats.
3. Each CPC may allocate no more than 2% of its quota for bluefin tuna among its small-scale coastal vessels for fresh fish in the Mediterranean. However, in the Gulf of Lion, this percentage may go up to 4%.

Each CPC may allocate no more than 90% of its quota for bluefin tuna among its catching vessels in the Adriatic for farming purposes.

4. CPCs whose baitboats, longliners, handliners and trolling boats are authorized to fish for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean shall institute tail tag requirements as follows:
- a) tail tags must be affixed on each bluefin tuna immediately upon offloading;
 - b) each tail tag shall have a unique identification number, which shall be included on bluefin tuna catch documents and written legibly and indelibly on the outside of any package containing tuna.