

This is a Joint Statement that has been prepared and endorsed by the Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) and the Federation of Maltese Aquaculture Producers (FMAP) in relation to the utilisation of unutilised quotas, within the same CPC

The process of purse-seine fishing for Atlantic Bluefin Tuna and the subsequent caging operations is a relatively complex and constantly evolving from an operational point of view. Fish are caught from around the Mediterranean basin and often transported to different farming locations, a process that can take several weeks.

Final quantification of the biomass from each fishing operation cannot occur until the analysis of stereoscopic camera footage from the transfer of fish from towing cages to farming cages is complete. Unfortunately, this means that there can be considerable delays, often stretching into weeks, between the actual fishing event and the processing of this footage.

Given that purse-seine fishing operations generally need to be concluded within a 36-day window for the western Mediterranean (from May 26 to July 1), it is highly difficult to finalize the caging of fish captured during this timeframe. Therefore, definitive figures regarding the quantities of fish caught will typically not be available until the end of the fishing season. Additionally, it is important to consider that adverse weather conditions may lead to inactive fishing days. This makes the practical process of redistributing unutilised fishing quotas within the fishing season a very difficult process.

Recently, there have been instances where unutilised fishing quotas could not be effectively redistributed within the fishing season. Having to release excess catches by a CPC that still has available quotas/quantities of uncaught fish within its allocation, that could compensate for that virtual excess is an unofficial penalisation on that CPC making the most efficient use of the allocated quota. Certainly, this is not the scope of Recommendation 22-08 and the effective redistribution of unutilised fishing quotas will in no manner effect the importance of maintaining the scope and integrity of the control measures foreseen in the Recommendation.

Therefore, we support all those measures that will allow the CPC to redistribute unutilized fishing quotas after the fishing season is concluded, thereby compensating for any excess catches of Bluefin Tuna, provided that the total quota allocated to that CPC is not exceeded.

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