



# International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) Annual Meeting, November 11–18, 2024

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

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## COMPLIANCE PROCESSES

### 2024 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.
- 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 most well designed and 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 reporting by ICCAT Contracting Parties and 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](#)

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## TUNA STOCK CONSERVATION

### 2024 Asks

- Adopt a new Recommendation for tropical tuna conservation and management that ensures bigeye and yellowfin stocks are maintained at sustainable levels. This will require stronger management measures to reduce the yellowfin catch. The measure needs to fully allocate the total allowable catch (TAC) between CPCs, especially for yellowfin.
- Maintain the current TAC for Mediterranean albacore.

### Background

The yellowfin TAC has been exceeded every year but one since it came into effect in 2012. In 2023, catches were almost 27% above the TAC and 15% above MSY. In addition, the yellowfin TAC is not allocated by CPC or gear which makes it impossible

to identify non-compliance by individual CPCs. The stock was assessed in 2024 and estimated to be very close to the biomass and fishing mortality levels that support MSY. Projections at the current level of catch indicate that it will become overfished in the future and therefore stronger management measures are needed to reduce the catch. The Mediterranean albacore stock was assessed in 2024, resulting in very different stock status outcomes, depending on two different data inputs. However, projections made under either result indicate that the current TAC of 2,500 tonnes will allow the stock to continue to rebuild.

## Priorities to Progress

Develop a plan in Panel 2 to rebuild historical fishery data for Mediterranean albacore in order to improve the stock assessment inputs.

### [Tuna Conservation Information & Resources](#)

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## 2024 Asks

As part of the revised tropical tuna conservation measure, and in line with ISSF's established approach to strengthening FAD management:

- 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 or IOTC; and
- Establish a timeline to develop a FAD register.
- If the Commission extends the current Recommendation for tropical tuna conservation and management for another year, adopt a stand-alone FAD measure that includes all of the above asks.

## 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 (EM) AND REPORTING & OBSERVER COVERAGE

### 2024 Asks

Increase observer coverage by large-scale longline vessels to 20%, allowing for the use of EM to reach this level.

### 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) for major fisheries 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 2023, ICCAT adopted [minimum EM standards](#) and program requirements for both purse seine and longline fisheries. CPCs with longline fisheries should embrace this opportunity to improve monitoring.

### Priorities to Progress

- Develop a plan to gradually increase observer coverage (human and/or electronic) on large-scale longline vessels toward 100% coverage in industrial tuna fisheries, including support vessels and all vessels engaged in at sea transshipment.
- Develop a Regional Observer Program for tropical tuna fisheries.

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



## TRANSSHIPMENT REGULATION

### 2024 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.



## EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES (HARVEST STRATEGIES)

### 2024 Asks

- Adopt a management procedure for western Atlantic skipjack recommended by SCRS, as well as multi-stock management objectives for bigeye, yellowfin and eastern skipjack.
- Panel 3 begins to plan for the development of a management procedure for South Atlantic Albacore.

### 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. The SCRS, with input from Panel 1, has developed MPs for western skipjack and North Atlantic swordfish. 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.

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## BYCATCH MITIGATION & SHARK PROTECTIONS

### 2024 Asks

- Require all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached without exceptions.
- Request the SCRS to review science-based mitigation techniques for seabird bycatch so the Commission can adopt revisions to Rec.11-09 that reflects up-to-date scientific bycatch mitigation best practices in 2025.
- Give full effect to Recs. 23-12 and 23-14 on whale sharks and mobulid rays such that they enter into force on 1 January 2025 and 1 July 2025, respectively.

### Background

In 2023, ICCAT adopted Rec. 23-14 on mobulid rays and Rec. 23-12 on whale sharks. However, the key regulations in both of them, like a retention prohibition, would not enter into force unless the SCRS confirmed that this was a taxon of the greatest biological vulnerability and conservation concern for which there are very few data. This year, SCRS confirmed that this was the case and recommended giving full effect to the two measures. 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](#)



## 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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