

**SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT
CONCERNING THE WESTERN ATLANTIC BLUEFIN TUNA REBUILDING PROGRAM**

RECALLING the 1998 Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish a Rebuilding Program for Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna [Rec. 98-07], the Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning Conservation of Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna [Rec. 02-07], the Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Rebuilding Program and the Conservation and Management Measures for Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean [Rec. 04-05], the Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Rebuilding Program [Rec. 06-06], the Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Rebuilding Program [Rec. 08-04], and the Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Rebuilding Program [Rec. 10-03],

FURTHER RECALLING that the objective of the Convention is to maintain populations at levels that will support maximum sustainable catch (usually referred to as MSY),

CONSIDERING that the 2012 scientific advice from the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) indicates that under the low recruitment scenario the western Atlantic bluefin tuna stock is above the biomass level that can support MSY and is consistent with the Convention objective. Under the high recruitment scenario (under which higher sustainable yields are possible in the future), the stock remains overfished and overfishing will continue under the current total allowable catch (TAC),

FURTHER CONSIDERING that the SCRS has estimated MSY to be 2,634 t under the low recruitment scenario and 6,472 t under the high recruitment scenario,

ACKNOWLEDGING that the SCRS continues to indicate that there is no strong evidence to favor either the low or high recruitment scenario over the other,

HIGHLIGHTING that the SCRS has noted that considerable uncertainties remain for the outlook of the western stock, including the effects of mixing, age at maturity, and recruitment, and that the short intermission between the 2010 and 2012 assessments did not allow sufficient time for key research projects conducted under the Atlantic-wide Research Program for Bluefin Tuna (GBYP) to be completed and resulting information to be incorporated into the 2012 assessments,

RECOGNIZING, however, that the 2015 stock assessments will incorporate new data from the research conducted under the GBYP and related activities and is expected to utilize new methodologies and an assessment peer review process,

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the value of increasing biological sampling to provide additional support toward addressing key stock assessment uncertainties,

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING the need to re-evaluate the western Atlantic bluefin tuna rebuilding program no later than 2015 in light of the 2015 stock assessment results and resulting advice from SCRS,

UNDERSCORING that the SCRS continues to advise that protecting the strong 2003 year class would enhance its contribution to the spawning stock biomass, which has the potential to increase the productivity of the stock in the future,

UNDERSCORING FURTHER that SCRS has advised that increases in spawning stock biomass may help resolve the issue of low and high recruitment potential,

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING that management actions taken in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean are likely to affect recovery in the western Atlantic, given that the productivity of the western Atlantic bluefin tuna fisheries is linked to the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean stock,

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the ICCAT Criteria for the Allocation of Fishing Possibilities [Ref. 01-25],

RENEWING the commitment to the full implementation of existing mandatory reporting obligations including those in the *Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Recording of Catch by Fishing Vessels in the ICCAT Convention Area* [Rec. 03-13],

**THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RECOMMENDS THAT:**

1. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities (CPCs) whose vessels have been actively fishing for bluefin tuna in the western Atlantic will continue the 20-year rebuilding program that began in 1999 and continues through 2018.

Effort and capacity limits

2. In order to avoid increasing fishing mortality of bluefin tuna in the eastern or western Atlantic, CPCs will continue to take measures to prohibit any transfer of fishing effort from the western Atlantic to the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean and from the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean to the western Atlantic.

TACs, TAC allocations, and catch limits

3. The rebuilding program for bluefin tuna in the western Atlantic will have a TAC, inclusive of dead discards, of 1,750 t in 2013. The annual TAC for 2014 will be set in 2013.
4. The annual TAC, MSY target, and the 20-year rebuilding period shall be reviewed and, if appropriate, adjusted based upon subsequent SCRS advice. No adjustment to the annual TAC or the 20-year rebuilding period shall be considered unless SCRS advice indicates that the TAC under consideration will allow the MSY target to be achieved within the rebuilding period with a 50 percent or greater probability.
5. If the SCRS stock assessment detects a serious threat of stock collapse, the Commission shall suspend all bluefin tuna fisheries in the western Atlantic for the following year.
6. The allocation of the annual TAC, inclusive of dead discards, will be indicated as follows:
 - a) The annual TAC shall include the following allocations:

<i>CPC</i>	<i>Allocation</i>
USA (by-catch related to longline fisheries in vicinity of management area boundary)	25 t
Canada (by-catch related to longline fisheries in vicinity of management area boundary)	15 t

- b) After subtracting the amounts under paragraph 6(a), the remainder of the annual TAC will be allocated as follows:

CPC	<i>If the remainder of the annual TAC is:</i>			
	<2,413 t (A)	2,413 t (B)	>2,413-2,660 t (C)	>2,660 t (D)
United States	54.02%	1,303 t	1303 t	49.00%
Canada	22.32%	539 t	539 t	20.24%
Japan	17.64%	426 t	426 t + all increase between 2,413 t and 2,660 t	24.74%
United Kingdom (in respect of Bermuda)	0.23%	5.5 t	5.5 t	0.23%
France (in respect of St. Pierre & Miquelon)	0.23%	5.5 t	5.5 t	0.23%
Mexico	5.56%	134 t	134 t	5.56%

- c) Consistent with paragraphs 1 and 6(b), the TAC for 2013 results in the following CPC-specific quota allocations (not including by-catch allowances listed in 6(a)):

	<i>2013</i>
	1,750 t
United States	923.70 t
Canada	381.66 t
Japan	301.64 t
United Kingdom (in respect of Bermuda)	4 t
France (in respect of St. Pierre & Miquelon)	4 t
Mexico	95 t

In no case shall the allocation to France (St. Pierre & Miquelon) and to the United Kingdom (Bermuda) be less than 4 t each in any single year unless the fishery is closed.

- d) Depending on availability, Mexico can transfer up to 86.5 t of its adjusted quota in 2013 to Canada to support cooperative research as specified in paragraph 19.
- e) Depending on availability, the United Kingdom (in respect of Bermuda) can transfer up to the amount of its adjusted quota in 2013 to the United States to support cooperative research as specified in paragraph 19.
- f) Depending on availability, France (in respect of St. Pierre & Miquelon) can transfer up to the amount of its adjusted quota in 2013 to Canada to support cooperative research as specified in paragraph 19.
- g) CPCs planning to engage in the cooperative research activities specified in paragraphs 6(d), 6(e) and 6(f) above shall notify the Commission and the SCRS of the details of their research programs to be undertaken before they commence and shall present the results of the research to the SCRS in time to inform the 2015 stock assessments.
7. A CPC's total quota shall include its allocations in paragraph 6, adjusted for underharvest or overharvest consistent with the remainder of this paragraph. Each year shall be considered as an independent management period for the remainder of this paragraph.
- a) Any underharvest of a CPC's total quota in a given year may be carried forward to the next year. However, in no event shall the underharvest that is carried forward exceed 10% of the CPC's initial quota allocation under paragraph 6, with the exception of those CPCs with initial allocations of 100 t or less, for which the underharvest that is carried forward shall in no event exceed 100% of the initial allocation under paragraph 6 (i.e., the total quota for such CPC shall not exceed twice its annual quota in any given year).
- b) If, in the applicable management period, and each subsequent management period, any CPC has an overharvest of its total quota, its initial quota for the next subsequent management period will be reduced by 100% of the excess of such total quota, and ICCAT may authorize other appropriate actions.
- c) Notwithstanding paragraph 7(b), if a CPC has an overharvest of its total quota during any two consecutive management periods, the Commission will recommend appropriate measures, which may include, but are not limited to, reduction in the CPC's total quota equal to a minimum of 125% of the overharvest amount and, if necessary, trade restrictive measures. Any trade measures under this paragraph will be import restrictions on the subject species and consistent with each CPC's international obligations. The trade measures will be of such duration and under such conditions as the Commission may determine.

Minimum fish size requirements and protection of small fish

8. CPCs will prohibit the taking and landing of western Atlantic bluefin tuna weighing less than 30 kg or, in the alternative, having a fork length of less than 115 cm.

9. Notwithstanding the above measures, CPCs may grant tolerances to capture western Atlantic bluefin tuna either weighing less than 30 kg, or in the alternative, having a fork length of less than 115 cm, provided they limit the take of these fish to no more than 10% by weight of the total bluefin tuna quota for each CPC, and institute measures to deny economic gain to the fishermen from such fish. CPCs granting such a tolerance will prohibit the taking and landing of western Atlantic bluefin tuna having a fork length of less than 67 cm.
10. CPCs will encourage their commercial and recreational fishermen to tag and release all fish less than 30 kg or, in the alternative, having a fork length less than 115 cm and report on steps taken in this regard in their Annual Report.

Area and time restrictions

11. There shall be no directed fishery on the bluefin tuna spawning stock in the western Atlantic spawning grounds (i.e., the Gulf of Mexico).

Transshipment

12. Transshipment at-sea shall be prohibited.

Scientific research and data and reporting requirements

13. In 2015, and thereafter every three years, the SCRS will conduct a stock assessment for bluefin tuna for the western Atlantic stock and for the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean stock and provide advice to the Commission on the appropriate management measures, approaches, and strategies, including, *inter alia*, regarding TAC levels for those stocks for future years.
14. The SCRS shall prepare and present a Kobe II strategy matrix reflecting recovery scenarios of western Atlantic bluefin tuna consistent with *Resolution by ICCAT to Standardize the Presentation of Scientific Information in the SCRS Annual Report and in Working Group Detail Reports* [Res. 11-14].
15. In 2013, a working group of fisheries managers and scientists will be convened as described in **Annex 1**.
16. The SCRS shall annually review available fishery and stock indicator trends and evaluate whether they warrant advancing the scheduling of the next stock assessment. In support of this evaluation, CPCs shall make special efforts to update abundance indices and other fishery indicators annually and provide them in advance of the SCRS annual species group meetings.
17. In preparation for the 2015 stock assessment, the SCRS should thoroughly review the evidence that initially was used in support of each recruitment scenario as well as any additional information available as a means of informing the Commission on which recruitment scenario is more likely to reflect the current stock recruitment potential. If the SCRS is unable to support one scenario over the other, the SCRS then should provide the Commission with management advice that takes into consideration the risks (e.g., risk of not achieving the Convention objective, lost yield) that would be associated with opting to manage the stock under a scenario that does not accurately reflect the stock-recruit relationship.
18. If scientific evidence results in an SCRS recommendation to alter the definition of management units, or to take explicit account of mixing between management units, then the western Atlantic rebuilding program shall be re-evaluated.
19. CPCs that harvest western Atlantic bluefin tuna should contribute to ICCAT's GBYP. In particular, CPCs should make special efforts to enhance biological sampling activities in order to provide significant new information for the new assessment. Priority research should be obtaining new information on natal origin, maturity, and age of the catch in all fisheries, following protocols developed by the SCRS. Complementary information will also be required for the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean stock in order to evaluate the effects of mixing. In addition, it is also important to enhance, and where needed develop, an accurate abundance index for juvenile fish.
20. All CPCs shall monitor and report on all sources of fishing mortality, including dead discards, and shall minimize dead discards to the extent practicable.

21. As part of the 2015 stock assessment, the SCRS shall review and report to the Commission on new available information on the potential existence of additional western Atlantic bluefin tuna spawning grounds.
22. Each CPC shall report its provisional monthly catches of bluefin tuna. This report shall be sent to the ICCAT Secretariat within 30 days of the end of the calendar month in which the catches were made.
23. The ICCAT Secretariat shall, within 10 days following the monthly deadline for receipt of the provisional catch statistics, collect the information received and circulate it to CPCs together with aggregated catch statistics.
24. All CPCs shall provide the best available data for the assessment of the stock by the SCRS, including information on the catches of the broadest range of age classes possible, consistent with minimum size restrictions.
25. This Recommendation replaces the *Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Western Atlantic Rebuilding Program* [Rec. 10-03].

**Working Group of Fishery Managers and Scientists
in Support of the WBFT Stock Assessment**

Structure

Establish a Working Group of Fisheries Managers and Scientists, which reports to the Commission.

The Working Group shall be comprised of fishery managers and scientists from Contracting Parties. The Working Group shall be Co-Chaired by the SCRS Chair and an individual (to be selected) who has fishery management expertise. The meeting shall be open to ICCAT-accredited observers.

The Group will convene a Workshop in mid-2013, to guide the work of the SCRS leading up to the next assessment. The Workshop participants will discuss ways to improve the communication of management goals, stock assessment results including the associated uncertainties, and management advice between scientists and managers. The Workshop will provide an opportunity for managers to provide input to scientists on the development of management advice.

Scope of Meeting

1. Describe the history of the science advice and management of the western Atlantic bluefin tuna stock prior to and during the rebuilding period that commenced in 1998, including the management actions taken by ICCAT and the stock responses.
2. Review the current knowledge of population mixing between the western Atlantic and eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean stocks, and stock assessment methods being considered that can accommodate such mixing between the stocks and the implications for the perception of stock status. Such approaches would facilitate the evaluation of the effects of the conservation and management measures in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean on the perceived status of the western Atlantic stock.
3. Review the basis for the current assumptions concerning spawning stock biomass and recruitment, including any evidence of changes in the ecosystem, such as environmental conditions, that could have had an impact on stock productivity.
4. Consider any other relevant issues relating to science and management of western Atlantic bluefin tuna.