



September 2015

MESSAGE FROM THE ICCAT EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The ICCAT Secretariat is pleased to present its readers with ICCAT Newsletter No. 22, informing about the latest events and activities of our Organisation. In April and May new staff joined the Secretariat: a Scientific Coordinator, an Assistant to the Coordinator and a GBYP Database expert. Additionally, within the new ICCAT Atlantic Ocean Tuna Tagging Programme (AOTTP), the Secretariat announced a call to fill the positions of Coordinator, Administrative and Financial Officer and Accountant. These new staff members will join the Secretariat shortly. These hirings will strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat to meet the new challenges related to tuna fisheries management, thus achieving the goals of the Commission more efficiently. The Secretariat is pleased to announce that in 2016 the Commission will celebrate its 50th Anniversary.

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RECENT MEETINGS

2015 has been another busy year for ICCAT. Since the previous Newsletter, six intersessional meetings of the Commission, eight SCRS meetings, and a meeting of the eBCD Technical Working Group have been held.

INTERSESSIONAL COMMISSION MEETINGS

Intersessional Meeting of Panel 2

The meeting was held in Madrid, Spain, 23-24 February 2015. The East Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna fishing, inspection and capacity control plans were approved, and the list of potential non-compliance events to be reported was agreed.

10th Meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM)

The meeting was held in Madrid, Spain, 25-27 February 2015. The objective of this meeting was to continue with the work to integrate monitoring measures in an extensive management framework, and in particular progress of the eBCD. Initial discussions on the role of observers deployed by national and regional programmes were also held.

1st Meeting of the Ad hoc Working Group on FADs

The meeting was held in Madrid, Spain, 11-12 May 2015. The *ad hoc* Working Group is composed of scientists, fisheries managers, industry representatives and other interested stakeholders, and will report on its work with a view to recommending the adoption of appropriate measures at the 2016 ICCAT Commission meeting at the latest. The discussions related to a wide range of issues, such as: assessing the use of FADs in tropical tuna fisheries; identifying data gaps; developments in FAD-related technology; stakeholder initiatives to manage FADs; and review of FAD management in other t-RFMOs.

3rd Meeting of the Working Group on Convention Amendment

The meeting was held in Miami, USA, 18-22 May 2015. The objective of this meeting was to make progress on draft texts for those issues which had been identified as requiring revision in the Convention, and to discuss issues which could be resolved by other means. Although considerable progress was made, the Group agreed that the work should be finalised and the final drafting agreed at a short meeting just before the Commission meeting.

2nd Meeting of the Standing Working Group to Enhance Dialogue between Scientists and Managers (SWGSM)

The meeting was held in Bilbao, Spain, 22-24 June 2015. The overall objective of the Working Group is to enhance communication and foster mutual understanding between fisheries managers and scientists. These efforts will support the further development and implementation of science-based management strategies. During this meeting the Working Group revised and discussed: basic components of the precautionary management; how harvest control rules might be designed for ICCAT fisheries; basic elements of management strategy evaluation and examples in managed fisheries.



3rd Meeting of the Working Group of Fisheries Managers and Scientists in support of the Western Bluefin Stock Assessment

The meeting was held in Bilbao, Spain, 25-26 June 2015. The Working Group reviewed the developments related to the three recommendations agreed by the CPCs at the previous meeting and discussed the progress on combining raw catch/effort data for individual fleets into a new index of western bluefin tuna abundance.

SCRS INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS

Meeting of the ICCAT Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods

The meeting was held in Miami, USA, 16-20 February 2015 with the objective: of making progress on the use of Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) to evaluate Harvest Control Rules and Reference Points

and to design a simulation study to show how to include spatially changing oceanographic and environmental conditions into the assessment process.



Bluefin Data Preparatory Meeting

The meeting was held in Madrid, Spain, 2-6 March 2015. It aimed to review all the available data and prepare the data required to carry out the full assessment of the West Atlantic and the East Atlantic and Mediterranean stocks, scheduled for 2016. Likewise, the activities were defined by the Core Modelling Group to continue the development of new modelling frameworks using Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) that can better take into account various sources of uncertainties.

Blue Shark Data Preparatory Meeting

The meeting was held in Tenerife, Spain, 23-27 March 2015. The major meeting objective was to revise all available data (catch, effort, size and tagging) aiming for the Atlantic stock assessment session in July. The results of several cooperative efforts led by national scientists to gather and analyse data were presented, including analysis of size data by sex and region for the main fleets operating in the Atlantic and a detailed review of all available life history information.



Bigeye Tuna Data Preparatory Meeting

The meeting was held in Madrid, Spain, 4-8 May 2015. The major objectives of the meeting were to revise all available statistical data (catch, effort, size and tagging), fisheries indicators and indices of relative abundances, with a view to the stock assessment session in July.

Intersessional Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Ecosystems and By-catch

The meeting was held in Madrid, Spain, 8-12 June 2015. This meeting had different objectives pertaining to by-catch and ecosystems. As regards by-catch, the main objectives were to review the methodology to be used to update the longline EFFDIS data and to update the ecological risk assessment of the impact of ICCAT fisheries on sea turtles and initiate the review of the efficiency of seabird by-catch mitigation measures. Regarding ecosystems, the primary objectives of the meeting were to review the progress made in implementing the Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management and to develop a list of key indicators and objectives for its implementation.

Intersessional Meeting of the Small Tunas Species Group

The meeting was held in Madrid, Spain, 10-13 June 2015. The main objectives of the meeting were to make an inventory of the overall available information, considering the recent efforts to improve the Task I and Task II data; and to conduct some preliminary analyses of these data sets. Moreover, the Group identified a hierarchy of species and stocks that are priority for assessment.

Atlantic Bigeye Stock Assessment Meeting

The meeting was held in Madrid, Spain, 13-17 July. The objective of this meeting was to evaluate the Atlantic bigeye tuna stock status, since the last assessment was conducted in 2010 and there have been significant changes to the historical data, mainly related to an influx of purse seiners from the Indian Ocean. The feasibility study of the Atlantic Ocean Tropical Tuna Tagging Programme (AOTTP) was also reviewed.

Atlantic Blue Shark Stocks Assessment Meeting

The meeting was held at the Oceanário de Lisboa, Portugal, 27-31 July. The objective of this meeting was to assess the status of the stocks (North and South) of Atlantic blue shark. The last assessment was conducted in 2008 and targeting of longline fisheries has developed in recent years.



Provisional versions of the detailed reports of the ICCAT intersessional meetings are available on the ICCAT Web site (www.iccat.int). Subject to final approval by the SCRS and the Commission, the reports will be published in the ICCAT Collective Volume of Scientific Papers or in the ICCAT Biennial Reports.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September

- *Meeting of the Technical Working Group on eBCD*, 17-18 September 2015, Madrid, Spain. Progress on the development of functionalities will be reviewed, as well as considering any outstanding technical issues. Consideration will also be given to recommendations to the Commission regarding future financing of the scheme.

- *Species groups meetings*. 21-25 September 2015, Madrid, Spain. These meetings will be held to update the biological information and the available statistics on all the species under ICCAT mandate. The tropical tunas and sharks species groups will carry out the update of the Atlantic blue shark and bigeye tuna stock assessments. The Sub-Committee on Statistics will hold a meeting that same week to review data submissions, as well as the progress made in the development of the Secretariat's databases. The remaining species groups will review new fisheries and biological information made available during 2015.

October

- *Standing Committee on Research and Statistics*. 28 September to 2 October 2015, Madrid, Spain. The SCRS will meet to review the status of all stocks and prepare responses to the Commission concerning scientific issues. This year, the SCRS will review the implementation of the 2015-2020 SCRS Science Strategic Plan, adopted by the Commission in 2014, and will revise the work plan for 2016.

Scientists who wish to present documents to the SCRS meeting should request in advance a document reference from the Secretariat.

November

- *24th Regular Meeting of the Commission*. 10-18 November 2015, St. Julians, Malta. The Commission will review the results obtained from stock assessments carried out during 2015 to adopt the recommendations and resolutions for the management of these resources. Other relevant matters to be discussed include the Terms of Reference for the 2nd ICCAT Performance Review and the Selection Process of the new ICCAT Executive Secretary.

For further information about these meetings (agendas, timetables, etc.), please consult our Web site: www.iccat.int and <http://www.bloom.com.mt/iccat> for hotel reservations in St. Julians.

SECRETARIAT ACTIVITIES

The Secretariat has continued to support the activities of the SCRS and the Commission.

During 2015, the Secretariat has continued to carry out the activities required of it for the implementation of ICCAT conservation and management measures, including the implementation the Bluefin Tuna Regional Observer Programme (ROP-BFT) on vessels and in farming facilities during the 2015 fishing campaign and the Regional Observer Programme for Transhipments, the maintenance of the various compliance records (vessels, traps, farms, ports) and the statistical and catch document schemes. .

The Secretariat continues to collaborate in the maintenance of the Consolidated List of Authorised Vessels. The ABNJ Steering Committee approved the extension of the expert currently employed by FAO who is coordinating the process of elimination of duplications and other actions, but from 2016, the coordination of this work will have to be agreed among the tuna RFMOs through the Kobe process.

Since the last edition of the *Newsletter*, published in February, members of the Secretariat staff have participated in meetings and activities related to ICCAT:

- Conferencia Internacional sobre la reducción de capturas accidentales de aves marinas en la pesca (Vigo, Spain, 28 October 2015)
- Joint Tuna RFMO Longline Observer Data Harmonisation Workshop (Keelung, Taiwan, 27-29 January 2015)
- EU Workshop on Reporting Obligations (Brussels, Belgium, 4-5 February 2015)
- Informal Consultation of States Parties to the Agreement meeting of the United Nations, 1995 (New York, USA, 6-17 March 2015)
- Training course on Stock Assessment Methods (Casablanca, Morocco, 9-13 March 2015)
- Réunion de la COMHAFAT sur l'amendement de la Convention de l'ICCAT (Casablanca, Morocco, 13-14 April 2015)
- L'atelier de formation pour la mise en œuvre de l'Accord FAO 2009 relatif aux mesures de l'Etat du port visant à lutter contre la pêche illicite, non déclarée et non réglementée, tenu dans la ville de Praia (Cape Verde, 20-24 July 2015)

- Second meeting of the Steering Committee of the Project for Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Common Oceans (Rome, Italy, 28-30 July 2015)

ICCAT played an active role in the various meetings with both written and/or oral contributions.

During this period, Secretariat staff have run a training course on stock assessment methods in Morocco.

Apart from the activities mentioned above, the Secretariat was responsible for the maintenance of the joint Web page of tuna RFMOs, which can be visited at: <http://www.tuna-org.org/>

Atlantic Wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna (GBYP)

GBYP Phase 4 was completed on 23 February 2015. The new GBYP Phase 5 started in late February 2015 and will terminate in February 2016. This new phase includes: a new component related to ancient genetic data recovery, a wider aerial survey in the Mediterranean Sea, electronic tagging in Moroccan and Sardinian traps and in Turkish purse-seiners, the collection of biological samples for studying ageing and stock boundaries on otolith shape and microchemistry composition and genetics, and the continuation of the work carried out by the core modelling-MSE Working Group. A total of 34 institutions from various ICCAT CPCs are involved in these activities.

The GBYP Steering Committee met on 10-12 February to review the work conducted during Phase 4 and planning Phase 5 activities.

Atlantic Ocean Tuna Tagging Programme (AOTTP)

The AOTTP is an ambitious initiative aiming to improve ICCAT knowledge of Atlantic tropical tunas in order to better assess their status and therefore improve management of these valuable resources and better contribute to food security and economic growth of the Atlantic developing coastal States. The Programme, with an overall budget of 15 million Euros, is financed with voluntary contributions and is intended to last for five years.

In June 2015 a contract was signed between ICCAT and the European Union. The USA and Chinese-Taipei had already committed to co-funding this initiative. Furthermore, there have been recent expressions of interest regarding additional co-funding from other countries

The Secretariat has developed the requirements for the recruitment of the most urgent members of the AOTTP team. Three fixed-term positions at the ICCAT Secretariat (Programme Coordinator, Administrative and Financial Officer and Accountant) were posted on 30 June 2015. These positions are expected to be filled by the 2015 SCRS meeting. Four additional people may be hired for fixed-term positions during the implementation period of the Programme (Assistant Coordinator, Publicity and Tag Recovery Coordinator and two Data Entry Assistants).

ASSISTANCE FUNDS FOR DEVELOPING STATES

ICCAT has established funds to encourage improvement in statistics for species under ICCAT mandate. Currently, there is a budget for special funds for data improvement established by *Resolution by ICCAT on improvements in data collection and quality assurance* [Res. 03-21].

These funds are provided through voluntary contributions from some Contracting Parties and from the Working Capital Fund.

Recently in 2015, capacity building funds aimed at supporting training in data collection and data analysis, stock assessment methods, etc., were made available: Japan Capacity-building Assistance Project (JCAP), CITES Small Scale Funding Agreement and the European Union Capacity Development Fund.

In 2011, the Commission adopted the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the Establishment of a Meeting Participation Fund for Developing ICCAT Contracting Parties* [Rec. 11-26], which establishes a special Meeting Participation Fund (MPF) for representatives from ICCAT Contracting Parties that are developing States. Later in 2013, the Commission adopted the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the Establishment of a Scientific Capacity Building Fund for Developing States which are ICCAT Contracting Parties* [Rec. 13-19], which establishes a special Scientific Capacity Building Fund (SCBF) supporting scientists from those ICCAT Contracting Parties which are developing States in their need to acquire knowledge and develop skills on issues related to ICCAT.

PUBLICATIONS

The following publications were issued in 2015:



The ICCAT *Biennial Reports* Part I (2014), Volumes 1 and 2 were published.

They contain the reports of the 2014 meetings of the Commission and the SCRS.

Six (6) tomes of the *Collective Volume of Scientific Papers*, Volume 71 were issued, which include 168 scientific documents and reports presented to the SCRS during 2014 and one from 2009. The Secretariat has been working with authors to make these available on the ICCAT Web site earlier. This year's edition of the ICCAT *Collective Volume of Scientific Papers* was published in early August.



Statistical Bulletin # 42 (II) was issued, which includes catch series by species and country since 1950. As of this year, the paper publication will be biennial, updated annually, and will be available in electronic format both on the Web site and on CD.

OTHER NEWS



In May 2015, Dr Miguel Neves dos Santos joined the permanent staff of the Secretariat as Scientific Coordinator. Dr Neves dos Santos had been an active SCRS scientist since 1998. He was the Swordfish Species Group Coordinator and the Head Delegate of the European Union to the SCRS.

In April and May 2015, Stasa Tensek and Alfonso Pagá joined the Secretariat, as Coordinator Assistant and Database Expert of the GBYP, respectively.



SCRS HISTORY

The Second meeting of the Standing Working Group to Enhance Dialogue between Fisheries Scientists and Managers (SWGSM) provided an opportunity for the last five previous Chairmen of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) to reacquaint. The Chairmen, in chronological order were: Joe Powers, João Pereira, Jerry Scott, Josu Santiago and David Die. The tenure of these scientists covered almost two decades of SCRS and ICCAT activities.



During informal discussions among the Chairs, it was noted how both the SCRS and the Commission have evolved during this period. There have been many developments in the science of tuna biology, ecology and population dynamics; and the SCRS has guided and coordinated those efforts. Additionally, the SCRS has continued to work with the Commission to ensure that scientific results are relevant to management needs and are communicated in an understandable manner. This allowed the Commission to better serve its mandate and improve the sustainable use of Atlantic tuna resources.

The Chairs agreed that these new developments have been significant in the evolution of ICCAT. Evidence for this includes the SWGSM meeting itself: maintaining a dialogue between scientists and managers. Also, the Chairs were supportive of continued efforts for dialogue.

The social gatherings allowed the Chairmen to reminisce about the past, catch up on families and to debate the efforts of ICCAT in the future.

Joe Powers

SCRS Chair 1997-2001

HISTORIC SCRS SCIENTIST

A historic figure of the ICCAT Secretariat, Dr Pilar Pallarés, the former Assistant Executive Secretary, retired in May 2015. Dr Pallarés served the ICCAT Secretariat for almost 10 years.

By way of short testimony to the extensive work undertaken by Dr Pilar Pallarés, Dr Josu Santiago, the former SCRS Chairman, has sent us the following text about her, to which little can be added.

"Always positive, responsive and ready to help with any initiative. A talented scientist with in-depth knowledge of the biology and dynamics of Atlantic tuna resources. Passionate about her work and capable of conveying that passion to all of us who have been lucky enough to work with her. Strong organizational skills and a good team leader. Of outstanding values, which she continuously pursued in her daily work dynamic. Always calm and deliberate, a particularly valuable quality in times of haste and urgency.



And, above all, a tremendous person and an excellent friend. Kind-hearted, generous and supportive. Critical observer of her social environment. Non-conformist and always rebellious towards injustices. Eternally young. Cultured, good conversationalist and keen on long walks. Host of unforgettable meals. And always proud of what she considers most important, her family.

Pilar Pallarés is this and much more, and was, until a couple of months ago, the ICCAT Assistant Executive Secretary. The time came for you to retire Pilar, but you have not left. The mark you made and many of your contributions will live on in the work of this organisation, particularly in the Secretariat and the SCRS, which is why, without a doubt, we will continue to remember you in our work lives. Yet, what is even more important, we have you and will continue to have you as a friend, and in this respect we will not let you retire. Thank you Pilar."



Through this *Newsletter*, her colleagues from the Secretariat wish her every success in this new stage of her life.

All recent ICCAT publications can be downloaded from <http://www.iccat.int>

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