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Rebuilding ICCAT's eBCD System as a Single Configurable CDS System

Strategic Direction for CDS Modernization and Cost Efficiency

Phase II: Decision Brief for the November 2026 ICCAT 25th Special Meeting of the Commission

Prepared for: ICCAT
Prepared by: Bluefin Data, LLC
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Companion documents: Executive Summary and Full Report on the Feasibility Study for the Modernization of the Electronic Bluefin Catch Document System, which precede this Decision Brief.

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Executive Overview

Purpose and Scope

ICCAT contracted Bluefin Data, LLC to assess the feasibility of modernizing the current electronic Bluefin Catch Document (eBCD) system and expanding it to additional Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS) species. Phase I assessed the system's technical condition and available modernization strategies. It examined whether Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna (BFT) and candidate species should use a single system or separate systems. It also evaluated the target architecture, migration approach, security requirements, resources, costs, schedule, and principal risks.

As concluded during Phase I, the existing eBCD system must be rebuilt. The system has served ICCAT well for more than a decade. It remains the only electronic verification and traceability system for BFT trade, handling approximately 50,000 catch and re-export documents each year. However, the technology beneath it has reached the end of its life. Core components no longer receive security updates, have no compatible upgrade path, and depend on discontinued tools and specialized knowledge to continue operations. Any delays in modernization increase the risk of a security breach or service outage and delay the inevitable need to rebuild.

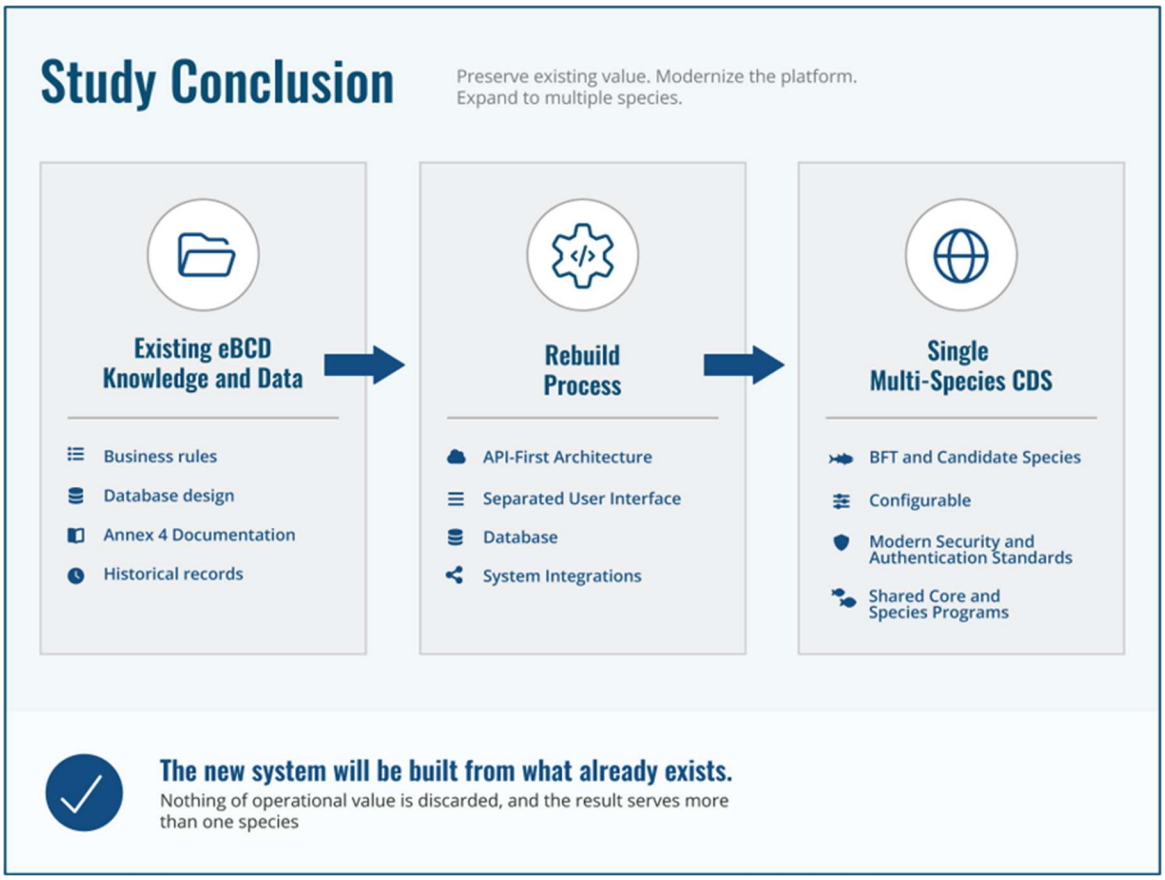
This decision brief recommends rebuilding the eBCD system as a single, configurable CDS system capable of supporting BFT and additional species, consistent with Phase I. At its second meeting in September 2026, the standing CDS Working Group endorsed the Phase I conclusion and the recommended direction for the future system. The CDS platform will retain all current eBCD functionality and accommodate additional species and associated workflows as ICCAT decides. The existing eBCD system will remain operational until the new platform has been proven and accepted.

Key Message

> Rebuilding the eBCD system is a complex, multi-year effort measured in millions of euros. Phase I estimated an initial investment of EUR 2.2 to 2.8 million for the recommended configurable-workflow model, annual operation and maintenance of EUR 350,000 to 550,000, and approximately 24 to 35 months to deliver. The optimal solution is a single CDS system retaining all current eBCD functionality for BFT, with the flexibility to incorporate additional species and workflows as ICCAT decides.

Feedback received during the study highlighted concerns about continuing cost growth. A single system avoids duplicating common functions, hosting, maintenance, support, and training. Developing two or more separate systems offers no long-term cost-efficiency for this scope. Configuration can reduce the cost

of future changes; however, requirements outside of a configurable system will still require software development.



Rebuild Investment

Phase I estimated the following costs for the recommended configurable-workflow model, in 2026 euros:

Cost element	Phase I estimate
Initial investment (all four phases)	EUR 2.2 to 2.8 million
Annual operation and maintenance	EUR 350,000 to 550,000
Changes within the configuration model	Absorbed within annual operation and maintenance
Indicative duration	Approximately 24 to 35 months

** These are planning-stage estimates, not procurement bids, and assume a specialist firm with fisheries or compliance domain experience. These are subject to open market estimates, bids, finalized project scope, and timeline.*

Recommended Actions

1. Bluefin Data recommends starting the rebuild immediately by protecting continuity of the existing eBCD system, documenting usage analytics, limiting changes to critical bug fixes or exceptional requirements and avoiding work that would duplicate the rebuilding.
2. Build a single, configurable CDS system that retains all current eBCD functionality for BFT and accommodates additional species and associated workflows as ICCAT decides.

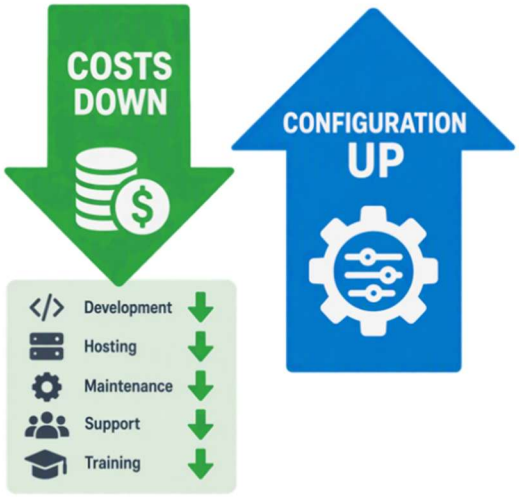
1. The Challenge

Phase I established the technical need and urgency to rebuild the eBCD system. Phase II identified the operational burdens that the rebuild must also address unmet expectations, rising development costs, and expanding demand for data-management capabilities within constrained resources. Replacing technology alone will not resolve these pressures.

ICCAT must deliver a more capable system while keeping its total cost of ownership manageable. It must also maintain the existing eBCD system throughout the transition. The challenge is therefore not simply to rebuild the system, but to establish a responsible way to prioritize, deliver, and operate essential capabilities as requirements evolve.

2. A New Approach

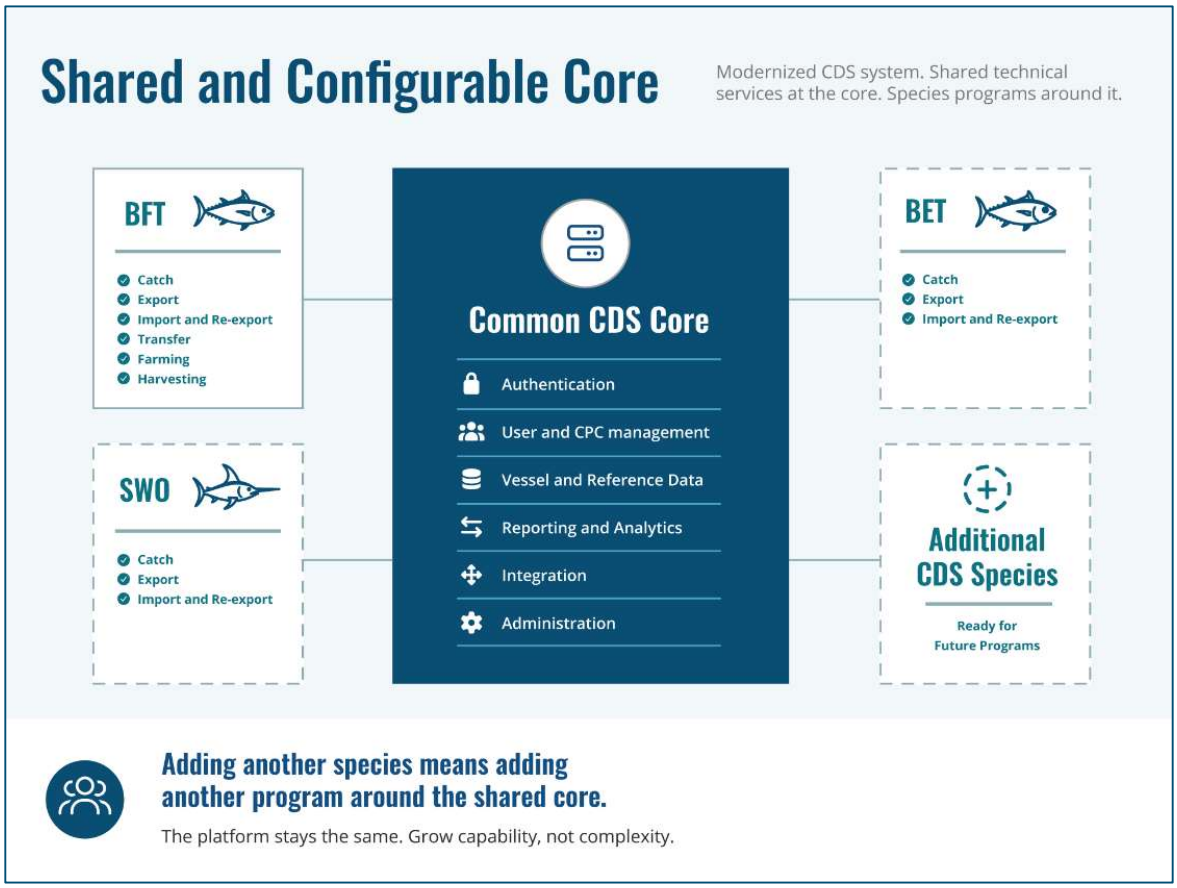
Simply rebuilding the eBCD system with newer technology could carry forward the existing system's high costs and implementation burdens. The rebuilt CDS platform should be a single, configurable application that retains all current eBCD functionality for BFT and can incorporate additional species and associated workflows as ICCAT decides. Common functions should be shared, with species-specific workflows and business rules configured within the same system rather than implemented in separate systems. This approach will reduce costs and development cycles for changes within the configuration model, while avoiding duplicated hosting, maintenance, support, and training costs.



3. The CDS System

The CDS system, or Common CDS Core, should retain all current eBCD functionality, including reporting, administration, control and compliance checks, and official-language support. Its principal components are:

- **A secure database:** Holds essential records, including the historical eBCD records migrated from the existing system, and supports ICCAT-approved rules for data access, use, stewardship, and export.
- **A browser-based system:** Allows authorized users, including validators acting on behalf of Competent Authorities, to enter, validate, and review data for every CDS workflow, including the complete BFT workflow from catch through transfer, farming, harvesting, and trade, and perform record and account management.
- **Configurable workflows and business rules:** Species, document sections, fields, validation rules, and user roles are defined through configuration. Changes within the configuration model can be made without a software development cycle; requirements outside it still require development.
- **A documented system interface:** An application programming interface (API) creates integration capabilities and connects the browser-based system to business rules and data services, without direct database access.



4. Rebuild Preparation

Changes to the current eBCD system should be limited to critical bug fixes, exceptional requirements, and user analytics needed to document and better understand current system usage. No other new functionality that would need to be replicated in the rebuilt system should be implemented. The current system should remain operational throughout the transition.

5. Proposed Next Steps

ICCAT will determine internal management responsibilities. The following high-level steps turn the recommended direction into action.

Step	Description
1	Confirm the approach: agree on one configurable CDS system retaining all current BFT functionality and able to incorporate additional CDS species as ICCAT decides.
2	Confirm scope: document all current eBCD functionality, system usage analytics, business rules, validation checks, and data and audit-trail migration requirements.
3	Prepare implementation: confirm the configuration model, security requirements, phased delivery approach, acceptance criteria, delivery approach, and timetable.
4	Confirm funding and procurement for the new CDS system, with updated budgets for implementation, essential legacy-system work during transition, and annual operation and maintenance.
5	Build and transition: reproduce and test all current eBCD functionality; migrate historical data, audit trails, and users; run both systems in parallel; retire the current system only after ICCAT acceptance; and add additional CDS species and workflows as ICCAT decides.

6. Closing

Rebuild the eBCD system as a single, configurable CDS system that retains all current BFT functionality and can incorporate additional CDS species and associated workflows as ICCAT decides. ICCAT is strongly encouraged to use the November 2026 25th Special Meeting of the Commission to confirm this approach and initiate the rebuild while maintaining continuity of the existing eBCD system.