

**FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN
AQUACULTURE PRODUCERS**

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Brussels, 12 November 2025

Federation of European Aquaculture Producers – Position Statement to Panel 2

(on the EU Proposal for Amendments to ICCAT Recommendation 24-05 – Multiannual Management Plan for Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean)

The Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP), representing the major bluefin tuna farming operators in the Mediterranean, welcomes the European Commission's continued engagement and leadership within ICCAT to ensure the sustainable management of the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna stock.

FEAP commends the European Union for its proactive role in updating the Multiannual Management Plan, taking into account the latest SCRS scientific advice and introducing practical improvements derived from operational experience in both farming and catching activities.

General Support for the EU Proposal (Doc. PA2_610/2025)

FEAP expresses strong support for the European Commission's proposed amendments submitted to ICCAT (Doc. PA2_610/2025), particularly regarding:

- Adjustment of the purse seine season opening to 19 May;
- Removal of the concept of "farming capacity";

These proposed amendments represent a scientifically sound, operationally feasible, and management-oriented approach consistent with both stock sustainability and the stability of the European tuna farming sector.

Specific Positions
1. Purse Seine Season Opening

FEAP fully supports the European Commission's proposal to open the purse seine fishing season on 19 May. This proposal, originally advanced by FEAP, is based on empirical evidence showing that climate change in the Mediterranean is affecting the migratory patterns of Bluefin Tuna in the Mediterranean and aligns the fishing calendar with actual biological and environmental patterns.

Advancing the opening date improves the synchronisation between fishing activity and natural migration, reduces the risk of adverse weather events later in the season, facilitates more efficient towing and caging operations, and enhances animal welfare outcomes by reducing stress and mortality during transfer operations.

2. Removal of "Farming Capacity"

FEAP strongly endorses the deletion of the term "farming capacity" throughout the recommendation, as proposed by the EU in Doc. PA2_610/2025. The term has no harmonised or operational definition and is not used as a control or reporting metric by ICCAT.

The retention of "input capacity" (maximum wild input tonnage allowed per farm) provides a clear, measurable and enforceable parameter consistent with ICCAT's current monitoring

and control framework. This simplification will strengthen transparency and comparability across CPCs while removing redundant or ambiguous terminology.

Other matters

With respect to other matters that will be discussed during the General Commission meeting, FEAP would like to present its position, in particular:

1. Total Allowable Catch (TAC)

FEAP suggests to proceed with the lower TAC figure (≈45,191 t) among the two values presented by SCRS and the Panel 2 Chair (Doc. PA2_612/2025).

This conservative approach reflects the need to ensure long-term stock stability, the precautionary principle embedded in the Management Procedure, and the importance of aligning catch levels with robust monitoring and control capacity across CPCs. This safeguards the sustainability of the resource and the predictability required by the farming industry to plan operations responsibly.

2. Growth Rate Assessment and Use of Confidence Intervals

FEAP endorses the SCRS recommendation (Doc. BFT_10/2025) that the 75th confidence interval (87.5th percentile) of the latest Growth rate table, be adopted as the threshold for triggering investigations into outlier growth rates observed in farming operations.

This approach provides a balanced and scientifically robust safeguard against potential anomalies, avoids penalising natural biological variability or normal operational differences between farms, and ensures consistency and proportionality in compliance monitoring. FEAP encourages DG MARE to actively support the SCRS position at ICCAT, as this will lead to more scientifically grounded implementation of compliance measures.

Conclusion

FEAP reaffirms its commitment to sustainable aquaculture and responsible bluefin tuna management within the ICCAT framework. The European Commission's proposals represent a well-balanced package that reflects both scientific advice and the operational realities of the sector.

FEAP therefore:

1. Supports the early opening of the purse seine season (19 May);
2. Supports the deletion of “farming capacity” while maintaining “input capacity”;
3. Supports proceeding with the lower TAC proposal;
4. Encourages adoption of the SCRS recommendation to use the 75th confidence interval for investigating outlier growth.

FEAP remains available to collaborate with DG MARE and other stakeholders to ensure coherent EU representation and the effective implementation of the updated Multiannual Management Plan.