



ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS
OF FISHING ENTERPRISES IN THE EU

EUROPECHE STATEMENT – Priorities for the 29th ordinary meeting of ICCAT

(17th – 24th November 2025, Sevilla, Spain)

Brussels, November 7th, 2025

The International Commission for the conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) will hold its 29th ordinary meeting in Sevilla, Spain, from November 17th to 24th, 2025. Europêche reminds the importance of this meeting for the sector, especially on both bluefin tuna management and yellowfin tuna allocation, FADs measures as well as their impact on the purse seine fleet's economic rentability. Compliance measures are also paramount to fight IUU fishing and ensure a level playing field to the European fleet in the Atlantic Ocean.

PANEL 1 on TROPICAL TUNAS

1. Transitioning from rebuilding to long-term sustainable management of tropical tunas

Europêche calls on CPCs to cooperate toward the adoption of catch limits and allocations that ensure the effective and equitable management of tropical tuna fisheries, noting that all three tropical tuna stocks are now in the green zone of the Kobe matrix, creating an opportunity to **move from rebuilding measures toward management approaches that secure long-term sustainability**:

- **Allocating the yellowfin tuna TAC among all CPCs, taking advantage of the possible increase of TAC up to 121,661 tons¹** to ensure its effective implementation and that the catch limits are not exceeded as well as setting a TAC.
- **Setting the TAC of bigeye tuna at 86.030 tons**, considered sustainable by the SCRS².
- **Giving priority in the ICCAT budget to the development of an ad-hoc, multi-species management strategy evaluation (MSE) for tropical tunas—building on a benchmark of existing multi-species approaches.**

¹ Point 13.1, table 1, p. 17 of the [2025 SCRS](#) report

² Point 13.2, table 1, p. 23 of the [2025 SCRS](#) report

Allocating yellowfin tuna to fishing CPCs is a necessity in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the fisheries, this allocation potentially being facilitated by an increase of the TAC to 121,600 t, corresponding to the MSY level.

Under Rec. 24-01 (para. 3)³, the bigeye tuna catch limit is set at 73,011 tons for 2025 and may increase after 2025 depending on the 2025 stock assessment, if there is at least 70% chance to keep the stock healthy by 2034. According to the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS), this probability is currently at 91%. We then recommend that the Commission increase the TAC for bigeye tuna, up to the median sustainable yield: 86.030 t.

For both those stocks, the European tropical tuna purse seine fleet has achieved significant catch reduction efforts for bigeye those last years, which contributed to improve the stock status, but meant cutting the fleet by 62%, from 21 to 8 vessels under European flags. Therefore, any yellowfin or bigeye tuna catch increase should benefit to developing countries, which have the right to develop their fleets, but shall at no cost adversely affect the EU fleet. It is only fair that those vessels who have made major efforts benefit, even to a smaller extent, from the TAC uprise, and that this benefit is not significantly lower than the increase of quota of other industrial fleets.

It is fundamental that the CPCs support the development of the western skipjack and multi-stock MSEs. Européche reminds that the SCRS advice indicated in its 2023 report that *“the highest priority [on tropical tunas] is to advance development of the multi-stock MSE and the western skipjack MSE”*⁴. Doing so and promoting a multispecies approach would ensure on the middle term an exhaustive view of the fisheries, including by-catch, and a coherent management. This work should have priority on the ICCAT budget, including over single gears management approaches, such as the one proposed by Poseidon project.

The multi-species MSE is an opportunity to develop an approach via an ad hoc process, not just cumulating and aligning on one species' MSE, which would deprive fleets from the possibility to make strategical choices. Européche recommends conducting a benchmark on existing multi-species approaches.

2. Removing the FAD moratorium to restore fairness and operational efficiency in tropical tuna fisheries

In order to ensure the fair, effective and proportionate management of all fleets and gears, **Europêche calls on CPCs to remove the current FAD fishing moratorium**, which has shown limited biological benefit but severe socio-economic and competitive distortions:

- **Eliminating the FAD moratorium**, in light of the improved status of bigeye and yellowfin tuna stocks and the lack of scientific evidence demonstrating a measurable impact of the closure on spawning biomass.

³ p. 23 of the [2025 SCRS](#) report

⁴ ICCAT's [2023 Report of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics \(SCRS\)](#) 18.1.9 p. 320

- **Reinforcing monitoring, control, and compliance mechanisms** to ensure that all fleets operating under ICCAT rules, including non-EU fleets, are subject to the same obligations and oversight.
- **Requesting the SCRS to deliver a dedicated assessment of the biological effectiveness and socio-economic impact of the FAD moratorium**, comparing its outcomes with other management measures such as TACs and catch limits.
- **Establishing a Working Group on Socio-Economic Impacts** within ICCAT, following the example of other tuna RFMOs, to regularly assess how management measures affect fleets, coastal communities, and dependent industries

According to the SCRS 2024 report, it remains **difficult to detect any measurable reduction** in the impact of fisheries on yellowfin or bigeye spawning biomass resulting from the FAD closure. This is expected, as the benefits of reduced juvenile mortality take time to materialize. However, the SCRS also noted in 2025 that absolute fishing mortality (F) has generally declined between 2017 and 2023 for all ages, with the greatest reductions observed among juveniles caught under FADs—indicating that existing management measures, including TACs and catch limits, are already contributing to sustainable exploitation

The SCRS further confirmed that the three tropical tuna stocks are now in the green quadrant of the Kobe matrix, meaning that rebuilding **measures such as the moratorium are no longer justified, and that focus should now shift to long-term sustainable management.**

Since the moratorium's introduction in 2016, the **European purse-seine fleet has experienced a 62% decrease in vessel numbers and a similar drop in catches between 2016 and 2025.** The STECF 2024 Annual Economic Report identifies the FAD closure as one of the main limiting factors affecting fleet productivity, citing reduced operational capacity and increased bureaucratic burdens.

The closure has also had a significant impact on African coastal economies, with several canneries—such as Airone and Atunlo in Cabo Verde and Côte d'Ivoire—ceasing operations due to irregular supply, while SCODI in Côte d'Ivoire faces serious sourcing difficulties.

At the same time, non-EU fleets—notably some operating under Senegalese and other flags—have not fully complied with the FAD closure, continuing to supply canneries during the moratorium period. This creates unfair competition and undermines both sustainability objectives and the EU fleet's viability. Europêche calls for stronger action within ICCAT's Compliance Committee, including potential IUU listings for vessels that repeatedly violate the closure.

Finally, tuna stocks shall be managed with operational and proportionate measures, including from a socio-economic perspective. Focusing only on purse seiners overlooks the potential for juvenile catch in other fisheries, which are less well-documented and lack reliable observation coverage, through high grading, discards, or inaccurate reporting.

PANEL 2 on EASTERN ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN BLUEFIN TUNA

Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna stock is a global success story for ICCAT. To protect this achievement, Europêche urges CPCs to adopt a transparent, science-based, and fair allocation system, anchored in recognition of past contributions and compliance.

1. Ensuring transparent, science-based, and fair allocation rules

To ensure legitimacy, transparency and recognition of good management, Europêche calls for:

- **Publication of methodology, formulas, and data sources** used for each category.
- **Demonstration tables and sensitivity analyses, consistency checks with Rec. 22-08 and 96-14**, for verification and reporting mechanism, including possible adjustment if criteria are not met.
- **Apply allocation rules consistent with Rec. 14-04** for the “pro-rata increase” component, in accordance with Rec. 22-08 which states clearly that the tables therein do not modify allocation keys from Rec. 14-04 until future review.
- **Ensure compliance and fairness by including automatic provisions to offset over-harvests, in full alignment with Rec. 96-14** (100% payback for one year over-harvest; minimum 125% pay-back and possible trade measures for repeated over-harvests).
- **Maintain a transparent and equitable reserve mechanism**, limited in size and accompanied by clear objective and accountability rules.
- **Guarantee that carry-over to 20% is applied equally across CPCs**, based on transparent criteria and verifiable evidence of genuine fishery development.

Europêche acknowledges the President’s proposal (PA2_612) as a constructive basis but requests clarification and justification of the proposed allocation “objective categories,” in particular:

- **New entrants:** provide rationale for the proposed tonnage and test alternative scenarios (e.g., 50/100/200 t).
- **Developing CPCs:** clearly define eligibility criteria and explain the two-tier treatment and factor-2 difference between CPC groups.
- **Provision of MP indices:** quantify index contribution, time-series length, and weighting criteria.

Also, Europêche highlights that the EU and its fleets have consistently complied with ICCAT conservation measures, have contributed significantly to rebuilding efforts, and have absorbed major socio-economic adjustments during the recovery phase. At ICCAT level, any TAC increase or re-allocation must therefore support responsible development without penalizing CPCs whose fleets have already delivered sustainability and compliance results.

2. Fair treatment and accountability across CPCs

Europêche stresses the importance of **equal treatment among CPCs**:

- CPCs with documented historic IUU concerns or recent COC alerts should only receive additional quota under verifiable compliance conditions.
- CPCs that consistently under-utilize quota should not benefit disproportionately from allocation mechanisms designed to reward active and compliant fleets.
- The development rights of emerging fleets are legitimate and supported by Europêche; however, they must not come at the expense of fleets that have already borne the burden of rebuilding this stock.

3. Advancing the MSE and long-term stability

Europêche strongly supports the **strengthening of the bluefin tuna stocks MSE** and calls on ICCAT to:

- prioritize funding and technical resources for MSE finalization.
- ensure a multi-fleet, multi-gear perspective.
- avoid ad-hoc allocation experiments outside the MSE framework.
- commit to stable, rule-based management in the next allocation cycle, based on scientific indicators and harvest control rules.
- A robust MSE and harvest strategy will provide predictability, protect the stock, and secure the economic viability of responsible operators.

FIGHTING IUU and PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY – all PANELS

1. Improving transparency and data accuracy

- Ensuring compliance with reporting obligations

Europêche recommends that CPCs agree on:

- Improving ICCAT's compliance scheme, especially by including a **sanctioning regime and by requiring CPCs to submit action plans that address identified non-compliances**. These plans shall be developed in 2025, and implemented by 2026 the latest, and must:
 - Include a hierarchy of infractions.
 - Provide a sanctioning mechanism to deal with non-compliance, and that it is consistently applied.
- **Taking action against contracting parties that are repeatedly failing to fulfil their obligations to report on investigations taken in relation to allegations of non-compliance and on actions taken to address compliance concerns.**

Regarding the FAD moratorium, CPCs having registered vessels under Asian interests⁵ have increased their total catches, all fleets included, 68%. In the case of Ghana for example, the number of purse seiners flying their flag is unknown but they increased their total catches 80% between 2016 and 2022, while not increasing proportionally bigeye catches⁶.

- Increasing observer coverage for all fleets

Reliable and accurate data collection is paramount to sustainable fisheries management. To achieve this, Europêche calls CPC to:

- **Implementing a regional observer program**, integrating existing observer programs, for all fishing vessels, in a realistic timeframe to ensure all CPCs will be able to comply.
- **Increasing, for fisheries targeting tropical tunas, the observer coverage up to 20% (on-board human and/or electronic) for all longliners and pole and liners**, considering that purse seiners already apply 100% coverage.
- **Promoting the use of electronic monitoring** to achieve this goal, now that Electronic Monitoring Standards have been adopted.

For fisheries targeting tropical tuna, the minimum coverage recommended by scientists for ETP species is 20%. Currently, the recommended observer coverage for longliners is only 10%⁷, which is insufficient to ensure data reliability. ICCAT requires higher observer coverage on

⁵ Ghana, Senegal, Republic of Guinea, Liberia, Belize and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

⁶ From document SCRS/2024/038 « Estimation of Ghana tasks 1 and 2 purse seine and baitboat catch 2019 – 2022: data input 2024 yellowfin stock assessment

⁷ [Recommendation 16-14 on minimum observation standards](#)

specific cases only: 100% for purse seiners and 10% for tropical tuna vessels for longline. The management of tropical tunas ([Rec. 22-01](#)) shall be revised to reach those levels for all vessels.

2. Enhancing Control, Monitoring, and Surveillance Measures

- **Improving vessels monitoring**

To ensure effective control, monitoring and surveillance, Européche strongly supports increasing transparency and accountability across all fishing fleets, particularly in the context of fighting against IUU (Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated) fishing. This includes:

- Establishing a proper **fleet register of all vessels fishing actively in ICCAT, including IMO number for all eligible vessels**. Currently, the exact number of active vessels, especially purse seiners and longliners, is unknown.
- Implementing a **regional Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)**.
- Establishing a **high sea boarding and inspection (HSBI) scheme**.
- Forbidding at sea transshipments.

Only a regional VMS tool would allow to verify vessels' activity and their correct registration in the ICCAT vessels' register, in order to ensure applicability and monitoring of tuna conservation measures, such as fisheries closures or capacity limitations.

High sea inspections are also required to ensure that vessels comply with ICCAT conservation and management measures (CMMs), as required by the [United Nations Agreement relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks](#)⁸.

- **Fighting IUU through market directed measures**

Europêche encourages CPCs to actively engage in the Catch Document Scheme Working Group and **extend the electronic Catch Documentation Schemes (eCDS) to cover all ICCAT stocks and species** as soon as possible.

This expansion should be aligned with the revised European Control Regulation⁹, which currently limits eCDS to certain fleets and species, and with the introduction of CATCH IT, to prevent the creation of a burdensome system that would disproportionately impact EU fleets.

⁸ In force as from 11 December 2001; Article 21 on Subregional and regional cooperation in enforcement provides that "1. In any high seas area covered by a subregional or regional fisheries management organization or arrangement, a State Party which is a member of such organization or a participant in such arrangement may, through its duly authorized inspectors, board and inspect [...] fishing vessels flying the flag of another State Party to this Agreement" and that "2. States shall establish, through subregional or regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements, procedures for boarding and inspection [...]".

⁹ [Regulation \(EU\) 2023/2842 of 22nd November 2023 amending the "control regulation"](#): Article 4, points (7) and (8) on Catch certification scheme for fishery products, to modify article 12 of regulation (EC) N°1005/2008