

CDS WG MEETING, ONLINE, 5 JUNE 2025

**Chair's Report on the First Meeting of the
Standing Catch Document Scheme Working Group (CDS WG)**
(online, 5 June 2025)

This report has been prepared by the Chair to facilitate reporting to the Second Meeting of the Standing Catch Document Scheme Working Group (CDS WG) and the 18th Meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures, to be held between 17 and 20 June 2025, in hybrid format, the in-person meeting being in Brussels, Belgium.

1. Opening of the meeting

This meeting focused exclusively on matters related to the Electronic Bluefin Catch Document (eBCD) system.

2. Nomination of Rapporteur

The ICCAT Secretariat volunteered to act as Rapporteur.

3. Adoption of the agenda

The Chair briefly outlined the agenda and invited CPCs to propose any additional agenda items for inclusion. Morocco proposed the addition of an item to address interoperability between its national system and the eBCD system, with the aim of avoiding data duplication. There was also agreement to discuss the document "Electronic Bluefin Tuna Catch Documentation System - Technological update" [CDS1_JUN_03/i2025] from TRAGSA. The Agenda is included as **Appendix 1**.

The List of participants is included as **Appendix 2**.

4. eBCD system overall state of play

TRAGSA presented data regarding eBCD system support activities during 2024 including volumes of support calls and emails which were mainly actions related to the roles of CPC administrators.

5. Review/progress of eBCD system developments and received cost/time estimate(s)

5.1 Issues developed and updated in Production Environment

TRAGSA introduced the functionalities that have been developed and implemented since the last CDS meeting and which were now operational in the production environment of the eBCD system, these included:

- Paragraph 102 of *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 21-08 establishing a Multi-annual Management Plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean* (Rec. 22-08): ICCAT Regional Observer Program (ROP)
- Reference 5.5.5: Development of functionality to allow grouping of fish from the same flag origin/same Joint Fishing Operation (JFO) (Second phase)
- Reference 3.4: Interannual comparison of tag codes
- Reference 5.5.6: Mortality during towing voyage
- "Tool tips" for product presentations

TRAGSA also highlighted other system improvements that are not directly visible to users but contribute to system performance optimization.

5.2 Issues with cost estimates available but not yet approved for development

5.2.1 Reference 3.1: Initial discussion of reflecting 'processing on board' in the eBCD system

TRAGSA recalled the cost/time estimate it had prepared for including this functionality in the system. Some CPCs enquired whether the new functionality as proposed would permit the Processing section to be completed after the Trade section as well as before, also whether traps or farms could trade unprocessed (whole) products. Another CPC expressed legal uncertainty and implementation difficulties if more than one operator were permitted to fill in the section and therefore stated a preference for assigning sole responsibility to the master of the processing vessel.

Following further discussion and the need for greater flexibility in this functionality, TRAGSA was requested to reflect on the points made and present an updated version of the requirements document at the Second Meeting of the Standing Catch Document Scheme Working Group, and parallel technical discussions may continue in the meantime by correspondence.

5.2.2 Reference 5.5.3: Transport area within td section to be mandatory and include dates of departure and arrival

On the basis of concerns previously expressed by another CPC, further bilateral discussions were encouraged, the outcomes of which would be reported to the CDS WG at a future meeting.

5.3 List of issues considered "open" but no decision taken

5.3.1 Reference 4.1: Cross-checks the total catch's average weight and the samplings' average weight. Tagging

It was recalled that the proposal relates to [Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 22-16 amending Recommendation 21-18 on the application of the eBCD system \(Rec. 24-16\)](#) concerning minimum size rules and the ability for sampling to determine individual fish weights when tagged. It was also recalled that the Permanent Working Group for the Improvement of ICCAT Statistics and Conservation Measures (PWG) agreed for the CDS WG to work with TRAGSA to develop a new functionality in the eBCD system to enable the cross-checking between the average weight of the total catches in the eBCD system and the approximated weights of the individual fish referred to in the derogation in paragraph 5d of [Rec. 24-16](#).

A CPC noted that as the derogation was now permanent, the system should be able to support verifications including through cross-checks, alerts or notifications when discrepancies arise between the system's average weight and the sampling.

TRAGSA informed it was not aware of the changes made in [Rec. 24-16](#) but committed to reviewing it and reaching out by email if it required further information. Further bilateral discussions were also encouraged between the CPCs concerned. It was agreed that on this basis this would be taken up at future meetings and TRAGSA would be in a better position to provide an updated time/cost estimate.

5.3.2 Question from Japan on obtaining the necessary data for the calculation of growth rates

A CPC recalled that some CPCs had expressed concerns about the time taken to analyze the proposal on the calculation of growth rates but noted that there was nothing new to report at this time and so suggested deferring the discussion on this point to a future meeting.

6. Discussion paper on the application of electronic Bluefin Catch Documentation (eBCD) in the pilot project for the short-term live storage of bluefin tuna [CDS1_JUN_05/i2025]

There was a presentation on the pilot project and in particular how the eBCD system had been used noting that the current system does not account for this type of operation. It informed that it had needed to use workarounds, such as the inclusion of a fictitious farm in the system and assignment of multiple roles to individual vessels. With this in mind it proposed to start discussions on future enhancements to the system,

including the creation of a specific role for storage cage/live-storage operators and other dedicated functionalities.

Another CPC expressed concerns, noting that introducing such system changes during a pilot project may be premature. It recalled that *Resolution by ICCAT on a pilot project for the short-term live storage of bluefin tuna (Res. 22-07)* included a review clause which should be carried out before moving forward to a Recommendation and technical changes to the system.

Following some further discussions, it was agreed to engage to continue with technical discussions including on the basis of the Pilot Project review foreseen later this year.

7. Future eBCD intersessional work as required

Whilst the next CDS WG meeting will not focus specifically on the eBCD system, an update on relevant issues time permitting would be useful to guide further eBCD intersessional activities. Correspondence was also encouraged on the points mentioned.

8. Any other matters

8.1 Morocco-eBCD Data Integration: Next steps toward interoperability

The need to ensure interoperability between its new national information management system and the eBCD system was underlined to avoid duplicate data entry. It also requested technical documentation on data transfer, formats, and protocols to develop its national system to be compatible with the eBCD system and expressed interest in obtaining guidance from TRAGSA.

TRAGSA understood that Morocco was requesting technical documentation on enabling interoperability through an asynchronous system, such as an application programming interface (API) or Web Service. Since the eBCD system did not support this functionality at the time, it would need to be developed. TRAGSA confirmed it had the technical capacity and experience to do so and proposed a meeting with Morocco's IT team to discuss further.

The Chair emphasized the importance of interoperability including in future CDS WG meetings and expressed the desire for the Working Group to be kept informed of those discussions.

8.2 Technological update of the eBCD system

TRAGSA presented a document outlining the need to migrate the eBCD system due to the obsolescence of its underlying technology, the main concern being that Microsoft ended support for version 4.0 in 2016. TRAGSA concluded that in its view the only viable solution was to migrate the entire eBCD system to a more modern framework which would require complete reprogramming and migration of the eBCD database.

As a general comment, the Working Group noted that it was challenging for it to fully evaluate the technical elements given that its role is more orientated to system business needs rather than technical design.

CPCs agreed with the rationale for a potential migration and the importance to ensure system stability and security but questioned the process, costs and next steps. One CPC was surprised that the proposal seemed to come from the current provider rather than being based on an assessment from the ICCAT Secretariat together with further information on cost benefits, risks and options. In this regard the importance of a detailed risk-benefit analysis and following procurement rules was underlined. Concerns were also expressed on the high costs reflected in the document which amounted to a doubling of the current eBCD budget. Finally, it was noted that discussions on any other new functionality would also need to be contingent on the decision on any general system redesign rather than isolated developments looking forward.

Another CPC noted that the system had been slow for users and hoped that the planned upgrade would improve processing speed and performance. However, it also expressed concern about the potential changes

to the user interface that a major update would involve, particularly regarding the adjustment period that regular users may need.

The Secretariat clarified it had requested the document from TRAGSA and underlined the main risk was the absence of technical support in the event of a system failure. The Secretariat also remarked that obsolescence is a risk inherent to all IT technologies. The Secretariat outlined both the advantages and disadvantages of requesting this from TRAGSA rather than initiating a new public tender. On one hand, TRAGSA had in-depth knowledge of the system which would ensure continuity, while on the other, a tender might offer broader participation but could lead to delays and differing costs. The Secretariat confirmed that a public tender process could be launched if the Working Group or the Commission decided to proceed in that direction.

Looking forward it was considered useful to identify the relative advantages and disadvantages of different system options with input from TRAGSA, the Secretariat, CPCs and IT experts. Based on this and a clearer understanding of available resources, the Working Group would be in a better position to determine the most appropriate technical solution.

The Secretariat was requested to provide these elements and possible next steps, including procurement procedures. Further technical contributions from TRAGSA in the meantime would also be welcome. An update on this issue was encouraged at the Second Meeting of the Standing Catch Document Scheme Working Group.

9. Adoption of the report

This Report will be adopted during the Second Meeting of the Standing Catch Document Scheme Working Group (CDS WG) to be held between 17 and 20 June 2025, in hybrid format, the in-person meeting being in Brussels, Belgium.

Appendix 1

Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Nomination of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. eBCD system overall state of play
5. Review/progress of eBCD system developments and received cost/time estimate(s)
6. Discussion paper on the application of electronic Bluefin Catch Documentation (eBCD) in the pilot project for the short-term live storage of bluefin tuna [CDS1_JUN_05/i2025]
7. Future eBCD intersessional work as required
8. Any other matters
9. Adoption of the report and adjournment

Appendix 2

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