

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE  
CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC TUNAS



COMMISSION INTERNATIONALE POUR LA  
CONSERVATION DES THONIDES DE L'ATLANTIQUE

COMISION INTERNACIONAL PARA LA  
CONSERVACION DEL ATUN ATLANTICO

Madrid, 30 October 2023

## ICCAT CIRCULAR # 11740 / 2023

### SUBJECT: CALL FOR TENDERS – TERMS OF REFERENCE – EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE OVERALL ICCAT MSE PROCESS

In 2015, the Commission directed the SCRS to develop MSEs for 8 priority stocks as the basis to provide management advice (*Recommendation by ICCAT on the development of harvest control rules and of management strategy evaluation [Rec. 15-07]*). Following the recommendation of the SCRS, the Commission in the 23rd Special Meeting of the Commission provided funding to carry out an external review of the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process. Currently the SCRS is undertaking five simultaneous but separate MSE efforts: (1) northern albacore, (2) bluefin tuna, (3) northern swordfish, (4) western Atlantic skipjack, and (5) multi-stocks of tropical tuna.

Each of the five MSE efforts are being led by their own respective Species Groups, some of which share the same members. Furthermore, each of the MSE's commenced in different years and have progressed at their own rates. This situation has led to separate approaches, all at varying degrees of completion, but with a sharing of ideas and methodology between them all. In 2021 the ICCAT Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods (WGSAM) stated that although there is some cross-referencing of MSE activities between species, thus far, each MSE process has been largely conducted independently. WGSAM saw the potential benefits as well as the potential liabilities in both the dependence and independence of the efforts.

The main objective of this Call for Tenders is to conduct an overall review of ICCAT MSE activities by an external expert. This overall review would serve to identify potential improvements, highlight any missing components or shortcomings of the current process, achieve efficiencies across species and promote standardization of the MSE process across species/stocks, where appropriate, refine and standardize MSE communication and stakeholder engagement, and provide guidance on what the future of MSE will look like within ICCAT. This could include the way the MSE processes are supported and how resources are divided, and how the MSE processes should be structured and supported after Management Procedure (MP) adoption. This review would not include the computer code used anywhere in the processes.

Therefore, ICCAT is kindly requesting proposals for such work, which shall be developed according to the Terms of Reference herein attached. The detailed offer shall be submitted **only to the attention of Mr. Camille Jean Pierre Manel**, the Executive Secretary of ICCAT, and Cc'ing Ms Ana Martinez, at the following addresses: [camille.manel@iccat.int](mailto:camille.manel@iccat.int) and [ana.martinez@iccat.int](mailto:ana.martinez@iccat.int), by **18 November 2023 (18:00h Madrid time) at the latest**.

I would be grateful if you could distribute this announcement to qualified individuals who might be interested.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

*Executive Secretary*



Camille Jean Pierre Manel



COMISION INTERNACIONAL PARA LA  
CONSERVACION DEL ATUN ATLANTICO

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**Attachment:** Terms of Reference (only provided in English).



## Terms of Reference

### External review of the overall ICCAT Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Process

#### 1. Background and Objectives

In 2015, the Commission directed the SCRS to develop MSEs for 8 priority stocks as the basis to provide management advice (*Recommendation by ICCAT on the development of harvest control rules and of management strategy evaluation [Rec. 15-07]*). Following the recommendation of the SCRS, the Commission in the 23rd Special Meeting of the Commission provided funding to carry out an external review of the MSE process.

Currently the SCRS is undertaking five simultaneous but separate MSE efforts: (1) northern albacore, (2) bluefin tuna, (3) northern swordfish, (4) western Atlantic skipjack, and (5) multi-stocks of tropical tuna.

The development/implementation of five MSE frameworks simultaneously has led to an increase on the demands of all SCRS resources as well as the ICCAT Secretariat and the Panels it supports. These increases have been met by both increased funding as well as a shifting of resources away from other areas deemed critical to the SCRS. The migration from traditional stock assessments to MSE-based approaches for fisheries management has changed the manner in which the SCRS develops scientific advice to the Commission and involves new ways to convey management advice.

Each of the five MSE efforts are being led by their own respective Species Groups, some of which share the same members. Furthermore, each of the MSE's commenced on different years and have progressed at their own rates. This situation has led to separate approaches, all at varying degrees of completion, but with a sharing of ideas and methodology between them all. Furthermore, although all five efforts are being contracted to different individual scientists, some of these contractors work for the same consulting firm and share computer code and other in-common resources. In 2021 the ICCAT Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods (WGSAM) stated that although there is some cross-referencing of MSE activities between species, thus far, each MSE process has been largely conducted independently. WGSAM saw the potential benefits as well as the potential liabilities in both the dependence and independence of the efforts.

Critical to the success of any MSE effort is the effective communication of the management results, trade-offs and implications. The SCRS discussed broad themes among the ICCAT MSEs. There was a strong emphasis on the importance of clear communication between scientists, managers, and other stakeholders throughout the process, for example via a standard set of terminologies and tradeoff visualizations. It was noted that clear and consistent communication was an important recommendation in other RFMO MSE reviews (e.g. International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, ICES). The SCRS discussed the continued need for strong Committee and Secretariat support for communication (e.g., workshops at the Commission meetings, MSE training courses for scientists and managers, Ambassador sessions, etc.). The SCRS noted that a [new website](http://www.harveststrategies.org) ([www.harveststrategies.org](http://www.harveststrategies.org)) is compiling communications tools on MSE, including "Slick". It was suggested that ICCAT workplans include very clear and explicit goals for communication progress within each step of the MSE process. The intended audience of each of all five efforts are their respective species Panels (Panels 1, 2 and 4). However, all efforts ultimately need to be communicated to the Commission Plenary sessions, as well. Of those efforts that have reached the stage of communicating results, some have developed their own individual html-based interface. These interfaces include graphical and tabular representations of the MSE products that have both their similarities as well as their differences.



In 2022 the SCRS formally recommended an overall review of ICCAT MSE activities by an external expert. This overall review would serve to identify potential improvements, highlight any missing components or shortcomings of the current process, achieve efficiencies across species and promote standardization of the MSE process across species/stocks, where appropriate, refine and standardize MSE communication and stakeholder engagement, and provide guidance on what the future of MSE will look like within ICCAT. This could include the way the MSE processes are supported and how resources are divided, and how the MSE processes should be structured and supported after MP adoption. This review would not include the computer code used anywhere in the processes.

## **2. Contractor Tasks**

### **1. Meeting with the Technical Working Group and Species Group Chairs**

At the beginning of the contract the contractor shall meet with each of the relevant Species Group rapporteurs individually (either in person or virtually) to discuss their approaches and methodology. At the end of the contract, the contractor will meet with the Species Group rapporteurs again, as a group, to discuss practical recommendations for moving forward with a common front.

### **2. Available resources**

Evaluate if the available resources (human and financial) were sufficient to accomplish the overall MSEs as expected.

### **3. Review the Inclusiveness of the MSEs**

Does the process include the input of the appropriate stakeholders (scientists, industry, NGO's, managers) adequately?

### **4. Assess the appropriateness of the degree of consistency between MSEs**

Is there an appropriate degree of overlap between MSEs such that they are different enough to address their unique concerns while at the same time recognizing the fact they are all ultimately communicated to the same Commission and should share common approaches to communication?

### **5. Evaluate the communication of the MSE processes to stakeholders**

Do the methods and approaches of communication of MSE strike the appropriate balance between simplicity and complexity. Is the communication process frequent enough (i) graphics, (ii) tables and (iii) text being used effectively easy to understand and foster trust in the process?

### **6. Did all MSEs undergo equivalent levels of review and quality control (e.g., code review)?**

### **7. What are the overall conclusions of the review and where can improvements be made?**



### 3. Deliverables

The successful bidder shall provide a SCRS document at least one week before the start of the 2024 WGSAM intersessional meeting, tentatively scheduled for early June 2024. This document shall be presented during the meeting and describe, in detail, the methodology of the work conducted and the preliminary recommendations obtained during the study.

Comments on the above mentioned SCRS document shall be provided by the WGSAM, the SCRS and/or the Secretariat, that shall be taken into consideration by the contractor, and included in a draft final report (formatted as an SCRS document), to be submitted to the Secretariat no later than **6 September 2024**. The draft report shall include a:

- a) Executive summary (limited to 180 words);
- b) Full description of the work carried out;
- c) Detailed description of final conclusions;
- d) List of references and literature cited.

The final report (formatted as an SCRS document) shall be updated taking into account the comments provided by the ICCAT Secretariat, SCRS Chair and the rapporteur of the WGSAM and be submitted by **13 September 2024** at the latest.

### 4. Contractor Minimum Qualifications

- Multi-year experience in MSE
- University degree in one of the following: fisheries science, marine biology, statistics, natural sciences, biological sciences, environmental sciences or closely related fields (in case of individual scientists).
- Excellent working knowledge of at least one of the three official languages of ICCAT (English, French or Spanish). A high level of knowledge of English is desirable.

### 5. Payment details

Disbursements will be made according to the following schedule:

- 1) 30% of the total amount of the contract upon signing of the contract and after receiving a regular invoice which may be submitted at the latest 30 days after the signature of the contract;
- 2) 50 % of the total amount of the contract after the provision to the WGSAM of a SCRS document to be presented during the meeting tentatively scheduled for early June 2024. WGSAM, its Rapporteur and the SCRS Chair, in consultation with the ICCAT Secretariat, will review the document and communicate any necessary revisions (if applicable) to the Contractor and/or inform of approval within 15 days of the submission(s). The Contractor shall submit the revised final documents (if changes are request) together with the regular invoice, no later than the **13 September 2024**.
- 3) 20% after the approval of the final report by ICCAT upon incorporation of comments made by ICCAT and after receiving a regular invoice according to work proposal and a complete set of the documents concerning the expenses incurred under the contract (if applicable).



## 6. Logistics

The text report shall be in MS Word or compatible software. All other documents provided by the Contractor must be in Open Office, Latex or compatible software. All documents submitted must be in English.

## 7. Copyright

All the material produced by the Contractor will remain the property of ICCAT. If applicable, all software written by the Contractor will be licensed under GLP or similar open-source licence.