

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, 25 March 2026

ICCAT GBYP CIRCULAR # G-00108/2026

SUBJECT: CALL FOR TENDERS - AERIAL SURVEY FOR THE MONITORING OF BLUEFIN TUNA SPAWNING AGGREGATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA - BALEARIC SEA AREA (ICCAT GBYP PHASE 15 - 2026)

I should like to transmit the Call for Tenders - Aerial survey for the monitoring of bluefin tuna spawning aggregations in the Mediterranean Sea - Balearic Sea area, under the Atlantic-Wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna (GBYP Phase 15 - 2026).

I would be grateful if you could distribute this Call for Tenders to qualified people and institutions that might be interested.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration

Executive Secretary

Camille Jean Pierre Manel

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Attachments: Terms of Reference for the Call for Tenders.
Area survey sampling design (**Attachment 1**);
Budget (**Attachment 2**).



Terms of Reference

Aerial survey for the monitoring of bluefin tuna spawning aggregations in the Mediterranean Sea – Balearic Sea area (ICCAT GBYP Phase 15 - 2026)

1. Background and objectives

The main objectives of the ICCAT Atlantic-Wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna (GBYP) are to improve: (a) the understanding of key biological and ecological processes, (b) current assessment methodology, (c) the management procedures, and (d) advice. Key tasks are to reduce uncertainty in stock assessment and to provide robust scientific management advice.

These require improved knowledge of key biological processes and parameters. Currently almost all the data used in stock assessments are obtained from fisheries-dependent data, which can be affected by changes in exploitation patterns and Total Allowable Catches (TACs). It is therefore important to obtain data from alternative sources, such as fishery independent indices, in order to verify the assumptions made when conducting the assessments or to improve the current data sets used within the framework of the BFT Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE).

Therefore, one of the major research tasks under the ICCAT GBYP has been the aerial survey for spawning aggregations (AS), which has already been carried since 2010 (related documents are available [here](#)), aiming to provide a fishery-independent index of relative abundance of spawning stock biomass.

The GBYP AS has faced numerous logistical challenges, which have resulted in changes in survey design and data processing to standardize methodologies and improve the accuracy of the index.

The areas covered by the aerial surveys have changed over the years. While the initial campaigns encompassed a broader portion of the Mediterranean Sea, logistical and budgetary constraints have led to a reduction in the area surveyed, focusing the sighting efforts in four “core areas” centered in the main spawning areas known in the Mediterranean (Balearic, Tyrrhenian and Ionian Seas, as well as waters between Anatolian peninsula and EU-Cyprus). Moreover, due to further budgetary constraints and changes detected in the environmental conditions affecting negatively the accessibility of bluefin tuna spawners to aerial sighting the survey in eastern Mediterranean was cancelled from 2019, and for the same reasons the SCRS Bluefin Tuna Species Group decided to also cancel the 2025 campaign in the central Mediterranean. However, to preserve the continuity of the aerial index time series-one of the key indicators used in the assessment of the eastern bluefin tuna stock, within the framework of the new management system based on the MSE approach - the aerial survey will be maintained in the Balearic Sea. The 2026 campaign will therefore be conducted exclusively in latter area, using the traditional human observer-based system and the same methodology applied in 2025.

This Call for Tenders is launched, for public or private entities, be they scientific institutions or interested companies, for the submission of proposals to carry out the full project, detailed below. Funds are going to be made available under GBYP Phase 15 (year 2026).

2. Contractor tasks

The Contractor will work in close consultation with the ICCAT GBYP Coordinator and the GBYP Steering Committee. The Contractor will **conduct aerial surveys in Balearic Sea (Area A)** covering the spawning aggregations, identified in the attached map, according to the sampling design attached (**Attachment 1**). The Contractor is responsible for obtaining the flight permits.



The Contractor will carry out the aerial survey targeting BFT spawning aggregations following classic visual observations and the sampling strategy defined in the attached files, where the coordinates of several series of replicas of transects are defined. The operational budget for this campaign is sufficient for several replicates according to the survey design. The **objective is to get four replicates**, and unless “force majeure” reasons concur, the minimum number of complete replicates will be three.

The **survey will be conducted in the period from the end of May to the beginning of July 2026**. The spotting altitude will be 300 m. The distance covered in a one-hour flight should be about 100 nm, with about 6 on-duty flight hours per day. It is reasonable to take into account adverse weather forecasts for 20% of the days (bad weather conditions mean winds over 3 on the Beaufort scale, or low clouds at less than 300 m altitude, or heavy rain, which prevent reliable observation of tuna schools close to the sea surface). It is **mandatory to apply the aerial survey protocol**.

The offer shall specify the following: (a) type of aircraft (adequate for aerial spotting, possibly with upper wings, two propellers and good forward visibility, mandatorily equipped with bubble windows, one on each side); (b) availability of a pilot and a professional tuna spotter; (c) availability of two scientific spotters, belonging to scientific institutions that are independent from the fishing industries; (d) survey time provided for each replica.

The Contractor shall provide a full GPS recording of all flights and sighting positions, together with the necessary way points when relevant. All sightings will also be documented with photos, preferably using a high resolution, geo-stabilised, GPS tagging, electronic camera. All photos will be delivered along with the final report.

The Contractor shall provide the sightings forms from visual observations, duly filled, at the end of each week (within a maximum of 24 hours after the last flight), in order to allow for real-time checks and corrections.

The awarded Contractor will ensure the participation of one official representative, the pilot(s), the professional spotter(s) and the scientific spotters in an online training course (1 day) to be held prior to the starting of field operations, possibly at short notice. Participation in the course is mandatory. The Contractor will provide photos and the personal details of all the staff working on the survey before the training course.

3. Contractor minimum qualifications

- Documented multi-year experience in bluefin tuna studies and/or aerial surveys or censuses of marine populations; previous experience in tuna aerial survey is preferred.
- Availability of an adequate aircraft for aerial spotting, including a technical description of the aircraft equipped with two bubble windows (one on each side) piloted by a licensed pilot having documented experience in this field.
- Availability of at least one professional tuna spotter, who has documented multiyear experience in this field.
- Availability of at least two scientific observers, preferably with previous experience in tuna fisheries or biology, aerial surveys and/or census of marine populations, and who pertain to scientific institutions or entities independent of the fishing industries and who hold a university degree in one of the following: Fisheries Science, or Marine Biology or Natural Sciences or Biological Sciences or Environmental Sciences or closely related fields.
- Excellent working knowledge of one of the three official languages of ICCAT (English, French and Spanish). A good command of English is highly desirable.



- Bank or Insurance guarantee for the amount of the contract, to be provided before signature of the contract.

4. Request for bids

Interested entities **should submit an offer only** to the ICCAT Executive Secretary, [Mr. Camille Jean Pierre Manel](#), with copy to [Ms. Stasa Tensek](#) by **14 April 2026 (18:00h Madrid time)** including:

- a) A detailed offer, the type of spotting aircraft to be used for the survey, the minimum number of flight hours to be guaranteed in total, the maximum number of stand-by days, the date for the interim report and the date for the final report;
- b) The curricula of the pilot, the professional spotter and the scientific observers;
- c) The curriculum of the institution or company applying for the GBYP Aerial Survey 2026, with any documented experience in aerial survey or marine population survey, to include recent and relevant contracts for the same or similar items and other references (including contract numbers, points of contact with telephone numbers and other relevant information);
- d) A detailed estimated budget for the aerial survey, specifying the cost, including number of working days, to cover four replicates, according to the attached table (**Attachment 2**);
- e) The name, address, VAT/tax number and telephone number of the tendering body, along with the contact number of the person responsible for field activity;
- f) The institutional and administrative background of the tendering body (e.g. statutes, type of institution, annual budget, budget control procedures, etc.);
- g) If the aircraft proposed for the survey does not belong to the tendering body, then a declaration from its owner should be included, to define the availability of the aircraft for this duty and to ensure that the aircraft is properly insured for all risks by a primary insurance company; a copy of the subcontract or MOU should be also provided;
- h) A detailed list of any subcontracting activities. Subcontracts can be allowed up to a maximum of 40% of the budget;
- i) The declaration that the offering institution will strictly follow the aerial survey design and the protocol provided by ICCAT GBYP prior to the beginning of the surveys, along with the forms to be used for the survey, and the administrative rules specified in the contract;
- j) A declaration that all the comments eventually made on the draft final report will be incorporated in the final report;
- k) A completed copy of the operating license and authorization (if applicable) and any administrative document, released by the competent public authority, demonstrating that the offering institution is authorized to operate the aerial survey;
- l) A declaration that the offering institution will provide an insurance guarantee for the full amount of the contract, before its signature;
- m) A declaration that the offering institution will be covered by full insurance for the aerial survey to be carried out according to the Call for tenders, excluding ICCAT from all liability concerning the work to be carried out by each offering institution;
- n) Acknowledgment of this Call for tenders;



- o) A statement specifying the extent of agreement with all terms, conditions, and provisions herein included.

Offers that fail to furnish the required documentation or information or reject the terms and conditions of the Call for tenders may be excluded from consideration.

Contractors can be either research institutions such as government or private laboratories, universities, or private consultancy firms or other entities having the required qualifications.

The Contractor will be available to report to any meeting requested by ICCAT.

5. Deliverables

- **Deliverable #1:** The sighting forms concerning the first week of activities to be submitted by e-mail the day after the first week of operations, at the latest, with the GPS tracks (electronic) and brief notes on specific problems.
- **Deliverable #2:** The sighting forms concerning the second week of activities to be submitted by e-mail the day after the second week of operations, at the latest, with the GPS tracks (electronic) and brief notes on specific problems.
- **Deliverable #3:** The sighting forms concerning the third week of activities to be submitted by e-mail the day after the third week of operations, at the latest, with the GPS tracks (electronic) and brief notes on specific problems.
- **Deliverable #4:** The sighting forms concerning the fourth week of activities to be submitted by e-mail the day after the fourth week of operations, at the latest, with the GPS tracks (electronic) and brief notes on specific problems.
- **Deliverable #5:** The sighting forms concerning the fifth week of activities to be submitted by e-mail the day after the fifth week of operations, at the latest, with the GPS tracks (electronic) and brief notes on specific problems.
- **Deliverable #6:** The draft final report to be submitted at the latest by **10 July 2026**, including:
 - a) Full description of the work carried out during the aerial survey;
 - b) Detailed description of the methodology;
 - c) Detailed maps of the area in which the aerial survey was carried out, according to the aerial survey design;
 - d) Maps with the GPS tracks of the survey, by date;
 - e) Detailed maps of the sightings, with GPS positions;
 - f) Full copy of the official sighting forms, complete with full details;
 - g) Complete copy of the photos and videos of visual observations taken during the survey (on appropriate digital storage medium), including their reference;
 - h) Scientific report, prepared taking into account the aerial survey design and the relevant literature;



- i) Summary;
 - j) A Power point presentation of the main results.
- **Deliverable #7:** The definitive final report, to be prepared taking into account the eventual comments provided by ICCAT on the draft final report (Deliverable #6), and the full administrative report including copies of all administrative documents, to be submitted by **24 July 2026**, at the latest.

6. Payment details

Disbursements will be made according to the following schedule:

1. 40% of the total amount of the contract upon signing the contract and after receiving a regular invoice;
2. 40% upon providing Deliverable # 5 and after receiving a regular invoice;
3. 20% after approval of the final report (Deliverable #7) and after receiving a regular invoice and the complete set of documents concerning the expenses incurred under the contract, that should be provided no later than **24 July 2026**.

7. Selection of proposals

The ICCAT Secretariat will review the offer(s). Following the revision process, the ICCAT Executive Secretary will notify the entity selected for the contract as soon as the selection process is completed. The contract will be awarded on the basis of competitive tendering and the evaluation of proposals will be undertaken objectively, consistently and without bias towards particular suppliers.

Proposal(s) will be evaluated against a pre-determined set of criteria, which include: i) cost (30%); ii) proven track record (30%); iii) technical merit based on workplan (30%); and iv) flexibility as regards future changes in requirements (10%).

8. Logistics

All documents provided by the Contractor must be in MS Word or compatible software, tables must be in Excel format or compatible, figures and pictures must be in JPEG or TIFF format or compatible. All documents submitted must be in English, French or Spanish.

9. Copyright

All the material produced by the Contractor will remain the property of the ICCAT, will be kept confidential, and cannot, in any case, be circulated by the Contractor. The scientific use of the data by the Contractor will always be notified to ICCAT in advance for clearance.

For further information concerning this Call for Tenders, please contact the GBYP Coordinator,
[Dr. Francisco Alemany](#)