INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC TUNAS

COMMISSION INTERNATIONALE POUR LA CONSERVATION DES THONIDES DE L'ATLANTIQUE

ICCAT CICTA CICAA

COMISION INTERNACIONAL PARA LA CONSERVACION DEL ATUN ATLANTICO

Madrid, a 25 de marzo de 2026

CIRCULAR ICCAT GBYP# G-00109/2026

ASUNTO: CONVOCATORIA DE OFERTAS – PROSPECCIÓN AÉREA DE CONCENTRACIONES DE ATUNES ROJOS REPRODUCTORES: ANÁLISIS DE LOS DATOS DE LA PROSPECCIÓN AÉREA Y NUEVO DESARROLLO DE ENFOQUES BASADOS EN MODELOS PARA LA ESTANDARIZACIÓN DEL ÍNDICE DE ABUNDANCIA - PROGRAMA DE INVESTIGACIÓN SOBRE EL ATÚN ROJO PARA TODO EL ATLÁNTICO (ICCAT-GBYP - FASE 15 - 2026)

Me complace enviar adjunta la Convocatoria de ofertas – Prospección aérea de concentraciones de atunes rojos reproductores: análisis de los datos de la prospección aérea y nuevo desarrollo de enfoques basados en modelos para la estandarización del índice de abundancia en el marco del Programa de investigación sobre el atún rojo para todo el Atlántico (ICCAT-GBYP - fase 15- 2026).

Le agradecería que tenga a bien distribuir esta convocatoria de ofertas entre las instituciones y personas cualificadas que podrían estar interesadas.

Le saluda atentamente,

Secretario ejecutivo

Camille Jean Pierre Manel

DISTRIBUCIÓN:

– **Cargos de la Comisión:**

Presidenta de la Comisión:	Z. Driouich	**Presidente del COC:**	D. Campbell
Primer vicepresidente:	R. Chong	**Vicepresidente del COC:**	Y. Vergara
Segundo vicepresidente:	E. Penas Lado	**Presidente del GTP:**	N. Ansell
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Vicepresidente del SCRS:	L.G. Cardoso	**Vicepresidente del STACFAD:**	B. Chavarría

– **Jefes de delegación/jefes científicos**

– **Partes, Entidades o Entidades pesqueras no contratantes colaboradoras**

Documentación adjunta: Términos de referencia de la Convocatoria de ofertas (versión sólo en inglés).

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Terms of Reference

Aerial survey for bluefin spawning aggregations: Aerial survey data analysis and further development of model-based approaches for the standardization of the index of abundance Atlantic-Wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna (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 management advice. This requires 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 TACs. It is therefore important to obtain data from alternative sources, such as the aerial survey for bluefin tuna spawning aggregations, in order to verify the assumptions made when conducting the assessments or to improve the current data sets used in Operating Model (OM) or Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE).

Therefore, one of the major research tasks under the ICCAT GBYP has been the development of aerial surveys for estimating the abundance and biomass of spawning aggregations, aiming to provide a fishery-independent index of relative abundance of spawning stock biomass (all documents are available here).

In 2026, the GBYP aerial survey, following the SCRS work plan adopted by the Comision, will be carried out in the western Mediterranean (Block A: Balearic Sea area) following the methodology that has already been developed in previous Phases (GBYP aerial survey protocol). The survey data will be analysed following the same methodology as last year, in order to produce a strict update of the index of relative spawning stock biomass and abundance.

Model-based approaches are a useful tool to improve the accuracy of the index, namely standardization of the index over the time series, taking into account the interannual variability induced by environmental scenarios that could affect the accessibility of BFT schools for aerial observation. This should be done following the general criteria for indices standardization recently approved by the SCRS Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods (WGSAM) (ICCAT, 2023; ICCAT, 2024).

Consequently, the SCRS BFT Species Group, during its April 2025 meeting (ICCAT, 2025), explicitly recommended to develop further work towards the standardization of GBYP aerial surveys index time series to improve the available time series, particularly for the aerial surveys in the Balearic Sea, by modelling the effects of environmental factors on the accessibility of BFT schools for aerial sighting, similarly to what has been already done in relation to the Gulf of Lions French aerial survey (Rouyer *et al.*, 2025).

In 2025, preparatory work was completed, including the identification of relevant environmental variables and the estimation of the response variables required to implement the modelling tasks required for index standardization.

Therefore, the current Call has two objectives:

1) Analyse the 2026 GBYP Balearic Sea aerial survey data following the same methodology as used in previous years, which corresponds to a strict update using the same detection function and following the same design-based approach, in order to update the time series of the index of the BFT eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean stock relative spawning stock biomass and abundance currently used within the framework of BFT stock management.

2) Reanalyse the available GBYP aerial survey time series (2010-2025) for the Balearic Sea area, applying a model-based approach in such a way that the standardized index (spawning stock biomass and abundance) takes into account the variability induced by changes in environmental conditions.

This Call for Tenders is therefore aimed at private or public entities for the submission of proposals to carry out the full project, detailed below.

2. Contractor tasks (TORs)

The tasks to be developed are to:

- analyze the 2026 GBYP Balearic Sea aerial survey data following the same design-based approach already applied in previous surveys, aiming at producing a strict update of the GBYP aerial survey index of relative spawning stock biomass and abundance time series.
- design a model following the requirements of the SCRS Bluefin Tuna Species Group for indices standardization and criteria established by the SCRS Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods (ICCAT, 2023; ICCAT, 2024).
- standardize the available abundance/biomass index time series using this model, accounting for the environmental influence on the index values across years.

The base data, provided by ICCAT just after contract signature, will be checked and corrected if necessary (this may require clarification from ICCAT).

3. Deliverables

Deliverable #1 A **draft final report** will be submitted by **31 August 2026** at the latest, and will include the following:

- A detailed description of the methodology followed to carry out the analyses.
- The results from these analyses.
- The processed data files used to carry out the final analyses.

Deliverable #2 The **final report**, to be prepared taking into account any comments provided on the draft final report, will be submitted by **10 September 2026**, at the latest.

4. Contractor minimum qualifications

- ☑ Documented experience in fishery independent abundance indices
- ☑ Documented experience in distance aerial surveys data analyses methodology.
- ☑ Documented experience in habitat modelling, previous experience tuna species in tuna species habitat modelling will be preferred.
- ☑ PhD or University degree in biological, natural, environmental or fishery sciences or related fields.

☑ Excellent working knowledge of one of the three official languages of ICCAT (English, French, Spanish). Sound knowledge of English is highly desirable.

5. Request for bids

Interested expert(s) should submit a proposal **ONLY** to the attention of ICCAT Executive Secretary, Mr Camille Jean Pierre Manel, with copy to Ms. Stasa Tensek by **17 April 2026, 18:00 Madrid time**, including:

a) Acknowledgment of this Call for Tenders.
b) A detailed proposal, based on the TORs of this Call for Tenders. Departures from the TORs may be made with detailed justification. It is allowed to present proposals addressed to only one of the tasks.
c) The *curriculum vitae* of the institution, including the full address.
d) A detailed (breakdown) budget, including unitary costs (if applicable).
e) The name, address, and telephone number for contact purposes of the expert(s).
f) The bank account of the expert/entity (bank name, account number, IBAN and SWIFT codes) and, if applicable, the VAT/TAX identification code.
g) A declaration that the expert(s) or entity (s) will follow the terms of this Call for Tenders, and/or any approved modifications agreed upon, and the administrative rules specified in the contract.
h) A declaration that the comments eventually made on the draft final report (**Deliverable #1**) will be incorporated into the final report (**Deliverable #2**).
i) A declaration that the expert(s) or entity(s) is covered by full insurance for the work to be carried out according to this Call for Tenders, excluding ICCAT from all responsibility concerning the work to be performed.
j) A statement specifying the extent of agreement with all terms, conditions, and provisions included herein, particularly specifying the date for providing the draft final report (**Deliverable #1**) and the final report (**Deliverable #2**).

The Contractor should be available to attend and report to any meeting requested by ICCAT; these costs will be paid on the basis of an addendum to the contract.

6. Payment details

Taking into account the schedule for carrying out the work, disbursements will be made according to the following schedule:

1. 50% of the total amount of the contract upon **signature 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% after the approval of **Deliverable #2** 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 **10 September 2026**.

7. Selection of proposals

The ICCAT Secretariat will review the offer(s). Following the review 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.

The proposal(s) will be evaluated against a pre-determined set of criteria, which include: (i) cost; (ii) proven track record; (iii) technical merit based on work plan; and (iv) flexibility in relation to future changes to requirements.

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.

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.