



## ICCAT Press Release

# ICCAT agreed a new management plan for tropical tunas and to amend the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, providing a mandate to manage oceanic sharks and rays

## 26th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas

25 November 2019, Palma de Mallorca, Spain – Just a few miles away from one of the favourite spawning grounds of the “king of the seas”, the Atlantic bluefin tuna, in the beautiful city of Palma de Mallorca (Balearic Islands, Spain), ICCAT (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas) has adopted a new multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas. In addition, ICCAT has agreed to amend the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, which modernizes the Commission and provides ICCAT with the mandate to manage oceanic, pelagic, and highly migratory species of sharks and rays.

The beautiful Bay of Palma (Balearic Islands, Spain) has been the setting of the 26th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). Palma de Mallorca was officially founded by the Romans in 123 BC and was the port used for destinations in Africa. The “king of the seas”, the Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna, has always been a regular visitor, since the Balearic Islands are amongst its favorite spawning grounds.

The Commission convened to evaluate the results of the 2019 working plan together with the current status of application of the regulatory measures in force and to establish the conservation and management measures for the future. In 2019, full scientific stock assessments were carried out for two species: **yellowfin tuna** (*Thunnus albacares*) and **white marlin** (*Tetrapturus albidus*), while new projections were provided for the **shortfin mako** shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*). In total, 12 new Recommendations and five Resolutions were adopted covering relevant issues on Atlantic tuna and tuna-like species conservation and fisheries management.

The Commission finalized the protocol to amend the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, which had been developed over the past six years. The new text modernizes the Commission and provides a mandate to manage oceanic sharks and rays.



A wave of cooperation allowed for significant improvements in the discussions and the adoption of a new multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas. The Commission agreed a TAC for bigeye tuna of 62,500 t and 61,500 t, for 2020 and 2021, respectively. The annual TAC for yellowfin will remain at the current level of 110,000 t. In addition, in order to reduce the fishing mortality of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna, it was also agreed to reduce the maximum number of fish aggregating devices (FADs) deployed by vessels and to prohibit the use of FADs for two and three months in 2020 and 2021, respectively. In early 2020, the Commission will discuss additional measures for the multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas.

Several conservation and management measures were adopted for sharks, with special attention being dedicated to the shortfin mako. The Commission could not reach a consensus on the annual catch limits, but agreed to impose restrictions for vessels to catch and retain on board, transship or land North Atlantic shortfin mako. The Commission also agreed to hold an intersessional meeting in 2020 to develop and propose additional measures towards achieving conservation and management objectives for this stock. For the first time ICCAT established annual TACs for blue shark, of 39,102 t and 28,923 t for North and South Atlantic, respectively.

ICCAT also agreed new rebuilding programs for blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish, with annual limits of 1,670 t for blue marlin and 355 t for white marlin/roundscale spearfish, beginning in 2020.

The Compliance Committee noted that some improvements had been seen overall in compliance and that progress had been made on a strategic plan for future meetings, and that agreement had been reached on continuation of the work on the online reporting system. Additional MCS measures were also taken by the Commission on vessel sightings and important improvements were made in observer safety.

In addition, the Commission officers received a second two-year mandate.

The 26th Regular Meeting of ICCAT was opened by Ms. Francina Armengol Socias, President of the Government of the Balearic Islands, who welcomed 680 delegates from 47 Contracting Parties, two cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities; and observers from six non-Contracting Party, six international organisations and 22 Non-Governmental Organizations. The acting Spanish Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Mr. Luis Planas, also attended the opening ceremony. The ICCAT Chair, Mr. Raul Delgado, in his final speech, thanked all Contracting Parties for the commitment with which they had carried out their work and their good will to ensure achievement of the objectives of this Commission: conservation of the tuna and tuna-like stocks. He also signaled that ICCAT needs sound fisheries management to effectively contribute to people's livelihoods.

Finally, ICCAT would like to express its sincerest gratitude to the Government of Spain and the European Union, and to everybody who, directly or indirectly, individually or as representatives, made this meeting possible.

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**26th Regular Meeting of the International Commission  
for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas**



### List of adopted Recommendations and Resolutions

- *Recommendation by ICCAT on fishes considered to be tuna and tuna-like species or oceanic, pelagic, and highly migratory elasmobranchs*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT to continue the development of an integrated online reporting system*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT on vessel sightings*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT on protecting the health and safety of observers in ICCAT's regional observer programs*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT on abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 16-01 by ICCAT on a multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 18-02 establishing a multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 16-12 on management measures for the conservation of the North Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT on management measures for the conservation of South Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT to establish rebuilding programs for blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 17-02 by ICCAT for the conservation of North Atlantic swordfish*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT on the conservation of North Atlantic stock of shortfin mako caught in association with ICCAT fisheries*
- *Resolution by ICCAT regarding participation by fishing entities under the amended ICCAT Convention*
- *Resolution by ICCAT on harmonisation and improved observer safety*
- *Resolution by ICCAT amending the Resolution 18-11 by ICCAT establishing a pilot program for the voluntary exchange of inspection personnel in fisheries managed by ICCAT*
- *Resolution by ICCAT establishing an ICCAT Working Group on Bluefin Tuna Control and Traceability Measures*
- *Resolution by ICCAT on development of initial management objectives for North Atlantic swordfish*