

**RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT FOR A PILOT PROJECT FOR
FARMING BLUEFIN TUNA (*THUNNUS THYNNUS*) IN THE CANTABRIAN SEA**

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that ICCAT has adopted the *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), the *Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 21-18 on the application of the eBCD system* (Rec. 22-16), and the *Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 18-13 replacing Recommendation 11-20 on an ICCAT bluefin tuna catch documentation programme* (Rec. 21-19);

RECALLING that in its 23rd Special Meeting the ICCAT Commission adopted a BFT management procedure (Rec. 22-09) intended to secure sustainable management of the bluefin tuna fishery, and provide stability and predictability for the BFT fishing activity, including for the farming sector;

NOTING an interest in exploring ways to (a) farm bluefin tuna in areas other than in the Mediterranean, (b) explore technological innovation for caging and farming bluefin tuna, and (c) assess the feasibility of implementing the current provision on monitoring farming operation when the farm is operating in open ocean conditions;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the results of research to be undertaken on Cantabrian purse seine fishing and farming of bluefin tuna in the Cantabrian Sea could indicate the need for adjustments to relevant ICCAT measures, or the development of new ones, including the need to include additional rules to the fishing season accordingly, and/or adding or revisiting current provisions related to the monitoring and control measures of the farming activities outside the Mediterranean Sea;

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. The objective of the pilot project for farming bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) (BFT) in the Cantabrian Sea is to assess the conditions for fishing and farming bluefin tuna in the Cantabrian Sea to inform the potential future development of such activities.
2. Research conducted as part of the pilot project should aim to provide answers to key questions related to fishing and farming of BFT in the Cantabrian Sea including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Assessing the functioning of technological developments of the submersible cages under extreme weather conditions.
 - Assessing that suitable schools (medium large fish) are available to purse seine vessels, in that area during the months July to November.
 - Assessing the growth and fattening of BFT in this area and exploring the potential added value of the activity, including in terms of direct fisher profits.
 - Assessing whether the monitoring and control of fishing, transfer and farming activities laid down by ICCAT Recommendation 22-08 are adequate and feasible to implement.
3. The pilot project shall be carried out on a limited scale, over one year, with a limited number of individuals (i.e., 50 BFT fish).
4. Notwithstanding paragraph 28 of Rec. 22-08, the fishing season for this pilot project may be extended to 30 September.
5. The precise details of the pilot project shall be included in the 2024 annual fishing, farming and inspection plans established in accordance with paragraph 10 of Rec. 22-08.
6. The allocation from the CPC's national quota to the pilot project shall be specified in the annual fishing plan and shall be on a limited scale and approved by Panel 2.

7. This plan shall also include details of the control measures to be put in place to ensure that the activity is carried out in line with ICCAT rules and with this Recommendation, as well as the way these rules shall be made mandatory for operators. The plan shall be analysed, and, as appropriate, endorsed by Panel 2 intersessionally (Rec. 22-08, paragraph 11).
8. The results of the pilot project shall be assessed by the Commission in 2024 to determine, in case the project delivers positive results, whether and how the commercial activity could take place beyond the pilot project stage.
9. CPCs participating in the pilot project shall submit a report on the results of the project for consideration by the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) and the Commission no later than the end of 2024. The report shall provide detailed information on the key questions mentioned in paragraph 2 above, as well as relevant statistical data, including the final number of BFT caught/caged and the individual length and weight of those fish at the time of capture and at the time of harvest from the cage. The report shall also identify the challenges or difficulties encountered, including regarding data collection and monitoring, control, and surveillance. In particular, the report shall include an analysis of the suitability of the current ICCAT provisions for this activity.