

RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT ON THE EXPERIMENTAL USE OF TRAPLINES

CONSIDERING the discussions which took place at the 2024 Meeting of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) and at the 24th Special Meeting of the Commission, and the identified uncertainties regarding the extent of trapline use and its impacts on both target (swordfish) and non-target species;

RECALLING the request by the SCRS in 2024 and 2025 for CPCs to implement measures that allow the use of this gear to be recorded and to conduct work on catch per unit effort (CPUE) analysis for target and non-target species;

FURTHER RECALLING the technical discussions of the 18th Meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM) on the necessity to align collection methods;

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

1. For the purpose of this Recommendation, a trapline is in general made by a series of concentric rings of increasing size, that can have a hook and/or artificial bait placed within the smaller ring, and/or can have lights attached to the larger rings. Traplines are generally deployed as part of a surface longline, alternating with hooks in different proportions.
2. To allow the SCRS to provide management advice on traplines, the use of traplines, used independently or in combination with other gear, is permitted until 31 December 2028.
3. CPCs may authorise their vessels to use traplines on the condition that they fully comply with this Recommendation and ensure data collection in line with the framework described in the paragraphs below.
4. When authorising the use of traplines, CPCs shall:
 - a) notify before the date of first authorisation, the ICCAT Secretariat of the list of vessels authorised to use traplines (authorised vessels), providing details, in line with the elements set out in **Annex 1**, including objectives, methodology, duration, and data collection protocols;
 - b) ensure that their data collection protocols are in line with **Annex 2**, and include information on catch, effort, gear configuration, and bycatch, including interactions with endangered and/or threatened species; and
 - c) report to the SCRS, as soon as available, the data collected and potential impact analysis.
5. Once the ICCAT Secretariat has received the lists of authorised vessels from the CPCs, it shall include them in the relevant ICCAT register of vessels, with a clear reference to the authorisation. In order to ensure inclusion in the register all mandatory information must be provided.
6. By the end of 2025, the ICCAT Secretariat shall create a draft reporting template to ensure harmonised data collection. A draft template shall be circulated to CPCs as soon as possible which shall use it when available. The SCRS, at its 2026 plenary, shall review the draft reporting template as well as the information included in **Annex 2** and advise the Commission if amendments are necessary.

7. By 2028, the SCRS shall evaluate the information submitted by CPCs to the ICCAT Secretariat and advise the Commission on:
 - a) the potential impact of trapline gear on target species, in particular on catch rates, size selectivity, possible increased effort and complementarity of existing measures;
 - b) the potential impact on bycatch species, in particular on whether traplines increase selectivity and reduce the impact on endangered and/or threatened species; and
 - c) the comparative impact of trapline with longline or other types of gear that traplines may replace.
8. The SCRS shall annually review the objectives and provisions of this measure and advise the Commission on potential amendments, including on the timeline for providing an advice and on information to be collected.
9. Once the assessment of the impact of the use of traplines has been carried out and management advice has been provided by the SCRS, the Commission shall take a decision on the possibility of their use for the ICCAT fisheries and possible associated technical, management and control measures.
10. Until the SCRS has provided advice on management and control measures, and in line with paragraph 18 of *Recommendation by ICCAT replacing the Recommendation 13-04 and establishing a multi-annual recovery plan for Mediterranean swordfish* (Rec. 16-05), CPCs shall ensure that its fishing vessels authorized in accordance with paragraph 3 and operating in the Mediterranean Sea follow that:
 - i) the maximum combined number of hooks and traps (loops) that can be set or taken on board of vessels targeting swordfish should be fixed at 2500 hooks, and
 - ii) a second set of rigged hooks/loops may be allowed on board for trips longer than 2 days provided that it is duly lashed and stowed in lower decks so that it may not readily be used.
11. Notwithstanding the provisions of Art. VIII, paragraph 2 of the Convention, CPCs may implement this Recommendation on a voluntary basis as of 1 January 2026.

Information to be provided by CPCs to ICCAT when authorising vessels to use traplines

When notifying the ICCAT Secretariat, CPCs shall provide, at least, the following information:

- Objectives and specification
 - Number of vessels authorised
 - Area(s) of operation
 - Targeted species
- Data collection protocols
 - Data under **Annex 2** to be reported by the masters of the fishing vessels
 - Data under **Annex 2** to be reported by scientific observers or electronic monitoring
 - Additional data to be reported
 - Observer coverage
 - Electronic monitoring coverage
- Reporting of the information to ICCAT
 - Expected timeline for reporting to the ICCAT Secretariat
- Analysis
 - Analysis to be performed (e.g. methods to assess gear selectivity compared to conventional longlines, comparison of the impact on target species, selectivity of the gear, mortality of non-target species, etc.), including who is expected to conduct the analysis (e.g. CPC national institute)
 - Expected timeline to present the results of the analysis to the SCRS

Information to be collected when using traplines by authorised vessels or observers

1. When authorising vessels to use traplines, CPCs shall ensure that the masters of the vessels and, if applicable scientific observers or electronic monitoring to collect at least the following information:
 - a) Information to be collected by scientific observers or electronic monitoring:
 - Fishing date and location;
 - Details of the type of traps and configuration used (e.g., baited or not, used with hooks or not, used with lights or not);
 - Soak time (i.e. time duration between starting and finishing of the operation);
 - Fishing depth (e.g. branchline length, hooks between floats);
 - Dimension of the gear (e.g. number of rings and perimeter of each ring (both smaller and larger rings));
 - Effort data: number of hooks and traplines used per set;
 - Catch data: species-specific catches on the hooks and traplines;
 - Discards and bycatch including interactions with marine-turtles, seabirds and marine-mammals.
 - b) Information to be collected by the master of the vessel (only required if not collected by a scientific observer or electronic monitoring):
 - Fishing date and location;
 - Fishing depth (e.g. branchline length, hooks between floats);
 - Effort data: number of hooks and traplines used per set;
 - Catch data: swordfish catches on hooks and traplines. When more than one third gear configurations are traplines per set, species-specific catches on hooks and traplines.
2. In order to evaluate the potential impact on juveniles, CPCs shall require their scientific observer to collect length distribution of retained species.