

ICCAT NEWSLETTER

No. 31, February 2020

Executive Secretary

Dear readers, on publication of this 31st issue of the ICCAT Newsletter, the Secretariat hopes that you have already started your prosperous journey in 2020 in the world of tuna. As usual, the past six months have been very busy for ICCAT with historic moments such as when the Commission adopted the amendment of its Convention during the Annual meeting in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. This modernization of the ICCAT Convention has mainly widened the mandate on species and taken onboard the ecosystem approach. While, as a result of collaboration with all CPCs and partners, significant progress has been made in many regards, much still remains to be done. The synergies that we continue to develop will guide our efforts to provide optimal responses to the different challenges. With our batteries fully charged, we are set to achieve even greater successes in 2020!
Happy reading!

Introduction



During the 26th Regular Meeting of the Commission, which was held from 18-25 November 2019, in Palma de Mallorca, Mallorca, Spain, ICCAT adopted a new multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas. In addition, 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 ray.

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 shortfin mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*). The following list of adopted recommendations will enter into force on 20 June 2020:

- Rec. 19-01 Recommendation by ICCAT on species considered to be tuna and tuna-like species or oceanic, pelagic, and highly migratory elasmobranchs*
- Rec. 19-02 Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 16-01 by ICCAT on a multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas*
- Rec. 19-03 Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 17-02 by ICCAT for the conservation of North Atlantic swordfish*
- Rec. 19-04 Recommendation by ICCAT Amending the Recommendation 18-02 establishing a multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean*



- Rec. 19-05 Recommendation by ICCAT to establish rebuilding programs for blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish*
- Rec. 19-06 Recommendation by ICCAT on the conservation of North Atlantic stock of shortfin mako caught in association with ICCAT fisheries*
- Rec. 19-07 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*
- Rec. 19-08 Recommendation by ICCAT on management measures for the conservation of South Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries*
- Rec. 19-09 Recommendation by ICCAT on vessel sightings*
- Rec. 19-10 Recommendation by ICCAT on protecting the health and safety of observers in ICCAT's regional observer programs*
- Rec. 19-11 Recommendation by ICCAT on abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear*
- Rec. 19-12 Recommendation by ICCAT to continue the development of an integrated online reporting system*

The 26th Regular Meeting of the Commission was attended by over 680 delegates from 47 Contracting Parties, two cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities and observers from six non-Contracting Parties, six international organizations and 22 NGOs.

RECENT MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE SINCE THE LAST ISSUE

Commission intersessional meetings

- Meeting of Panel 1 (*Palma de Mallorca, Mallorca, Spain 16-17 November 2019*)

Commission meeting

- 26th Regular Meeting of the Commission (*Palma de Mallorca, Mallorca, Spain 18-25 November 2019*)

SCRS intersessional meetings

- Meeting of the Sub-committee on Statistics (*Madrid, Spain, 23-24 September 2019*)
- SCRS Species Groups Meeting (*Madrid, Spain, 23-27 September 2019*)
- Meeting of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) (*Madrid, Spain, 30 September to 4 October 2019*)
- Port Inspection Expert Group for Capacity Building and Assistance (*Madrid, Spain, 6 and 7 February 2020*)
- Intersessional Meeting on SCRS Process and Protocol (*Madrid, Spain, 20-22 February 2020*)
- Intersessional Meeting of the ICCAT Bluefin Tuna MSE Technical Group (*Madrid, Spain, 24-28 February 2020*)

Workshops

- Workshop on collaborative work to assess marine turtle bycatch in pelagic longline (*27-31 January, Malaga, Spain*)
- Workshop on Reproductive and Other Life History Aspects of the Porbeagle and other Pelagic Shark in the Atlantic Ocean (*3-7 February, Olhão, Portugal*)
- ICCAT Small Tunas Sampling and Biology Workshop (*17-21 February, Malaga, Spain*)



External meetings

Between September 2019 and February 2020, members of the Secretariat staff have participated actively in meetings and activities related to ICCAT, providing both written and/or oral contributions.

- 16th Liaison Meeting (sub-group of the European Commission Expert Group on Fisheries Data Collection) between the chairs of RCGS & PGECON, STECF meetings on DCF, RDB steering groups, key end-users (ICES, STECF, GFCM, RFMOS), JRC and the Commission (*Brussels, Belgium, 3-4 September 2019*)
- Mediterranean Advisory Council MEDAC, (*Ljubljana, Slovenia, 11 October 2019*)

OTHER ACTIVITIES

In November 2019, with the collaboration of the Namibian authorities, JCAP financed and developed a training course on capacity building in Namibia to improve data collection and reporting on tuna fisheries, to complete and report Task 1 and Task 2 datasets to ICCAT and to recover historical datasets on tuna and tuna-like species. Unfortunately, despite all the efforts by the Secretariat to organize a similar training course in Angola, this capacity building initiative has not yet been scheduled due to logistical issues faced by the local authorities related to ongoing internal changes at the Directorate of National Fisheries. The new five-year ICCAT-JAPAN Capacity-building Assistance Project (JCAP-2), which started in December 2020, includes a new work package, aiming to *enhance scientific capacity building through Masters degrees and/or long-term training in research laboratories*. The ongoing data collection programme in Liberia has been financed through JCAP-2, and funding for 2020 has been approved.

ONGOING RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION PROGRAMMES

After successful completion in September 2019 of Phase 8 of the *Atlantic-Wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna (GBYP)*, the next two phases of the Programme i.e. Phases 9 and 10, have been initiated, and are being implemented in parallel over the first months of 2020. Phase 9, with a total budget of €1,750,000, started on 1 January 2019 and is scheduled to end on 30 April 2020, following a four-month extension. It has focused on different lines of research, such as tagging trials, development and methodological improvement of aerial surveys, collection of biological samples, microchemical and genetic analyses, ageing and implementation of a broad study on BFT growth on farms in five areas, as well as on further advances in implementation of the BFT Management Strategies Evaluation. Phase 10, which started on 1 January 2020, will run for a year, and is a logical continuation of the activities initiated in the previous phases, but will increasingly focus on improving coordination between GBYP activities and the many monitoring and research activities carried out on BFT by other institutions, both at national and international level, such as ichthyoplankton studies and tagging trials, as well as on the design and development of broad relational databases to integrate the huge amount of data generated in previous GBYP phases, such as those from biological samples analyses, aerial surveys, electronic tags or stereo-cameras measurements. In addition, a novel non-invasive method for monitoring BFT growth in farms which combines acoustic and imaging techniques will be tested shortly, and the feasibility will be explored of implementing a close-kin mark-recapture study for the eastern stock of Atlantic bluefin tuna, and of using acoustic techniques for developing BFT abundance indices. Phase 10 has a total budget of €2,000,000.

The *Atlantic Ocean Tropical tuna Tagging Programme (AOTTP)* recently began tagging tuna around an oceanographic observation buoy 600 nautical miles north of the Brazilian coast. The overall target to tag 120,000 fish across the tropical Atlantic will be reached very soon. To date nearly 17,000 tagged fish have been recovered with metadata. AOTTP Coordination is now organising the Final Symposium which will take place in Dakar, Senegal, in June 2020. The project has also recently been evaluated by independent consultants and their recommendations will be published during the first quarter 2020.



Small Tunas Year Programme (SMTYP) continued developing biological studies on key population parameters for selected small tuna species, which are essential for carrying out stock assessments in the near future. These studies have been conducted by a new cooperative and coordinated consortium composed of teams from CPCs from North and western Africa, South America and South West Europe.

Enhanced Programme for Billfish Research (EPBR) has expanded its activities, and is developing biological studies on key population parameters for the three major billfish species (blue and white marlins and sailfish) in the eastern Atlantic. This work, which is being carried out by a Consortium of western African countries, is essential to improve billfish stock assessments.

Shark Research and Data Collection Programme (SRDCP) has focused its activities on four major themes: age and growth study; population genetics; stock boundaries, migrations and habitat use; and, post-release mortality on pelagic longline fisheries. This year the focus of the ongoing studies has now been extended to porbeagle and other shark species currently subject to a prohibition on retention in ICCAT (i.e. threshers, silk, oceanic whitetip and hammerhead sharks).

ASSISTANCE FUNDS FOR DEVELOPING STATES

In 2019, the Meeting Participation Fund for Developing ICCAT Contracting Parties (Rec. 14-14), financed the attendance of 105 delegates from 30 CPCs at ICCAT scientific and non-scientific meetings. The Commission has adopted new [Rules of procedure for the administration of the special Meeting Participation Fund](#).

PUBLICATIONS

Issue 8 of Volume 75 and Issues 1 to 11 of Volume 76 of the *Collective Volume of Scientific Papers*, including 179 scientific papers and reports presented to the SCRS during 2019, have been published.

2020 CALENDER OF EVENTS

The following events are scheduled to be held in 2020:

Commission meetings

- [Intersessional Meeting of the Panel 2 and of the Working Group on Bluefin Tuna Control and Traceability Measures \(2-6 March, Madrid, Spain\)](#)
- Intersessional Meeting of the Panel 1 (20-23 April, Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, Azores)
- 14th Meeting of the IMM Working Group (4-7 May, Madrid, Spain)
- Meeting of the Working Group for the Development of an Online Reporting System (IOMS) (8-9 May, Madrid, Spain)
- Intersessional Meeting of the Panel 4 (6-9 July, Santiago de Compostela, Spain)
- Intersessional Meeting of the Compliance Committee (COC) (21-22 November, Antalya, Turkey)
- 22nd Special Meeting of the Commission (23-30 November, Antalya, Turkey)

SCRS meetings

- [Intersessional Meeting of the Swordfish Tuna Species Group \(16-20 March, Madrid, Spain\)](#)
- Intersessional Meeting of the Bluefin Tuna Species Group (20-24 April, Madrid, Spain)
- Intersessional meeting of the Sub-committee on Ecosystems (18-22 May, Madrid, Spain)
- Intersessional meeting of the Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods (18-22 May, Madrid, Spain)
- Mediterranean Swordfish Stock Assessment Meeting (25-28 May, Crete, Greece)



- Porbeagle Stock Assessment Meeting (15-19 June, Faial, Azores, Portugal)
- Bigeye Tuna and Skipjack Data Preparatory Meeting (19-23 June, Dakar, Senegal)
- Atlantic Albacore Stock Assessment Meeting (29 June-4 July, Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain)
- Intersessional Meeting of Bluefin Tuna MSE Technical Group (20-23 July, St. Andrews, N. Brunswick, Canada)
- Intersessional Meeting of the Bluefin Tuna Species Group (17-19 September, Madrid, Spain)
- SCRS Species Groups Meetings (SC Statistics 24-25) (21-25 September, Madrid, Spain)
- Meeting of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) (28 September to 2 October, Madrid, Spain)

COM/SCRS meeting

- Symposium of the Atlantic Ocean Tropical tuna Tagging Programme (AOTTP) (16-18 June, Dakar, Senegal)

Workshops

- [Workshop on Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Tagging \(11-13 March, Madrid, Spain\)](#)
- Atlantic bluefin tuna eastern stock larval index surveys coordination workshop (11-13 March, TBC)
- Workshop on the potential use of Close Kin methods for the assessment of Eastern Atlantic Bluefin tuna stock (27-29 April, TBC)

Other activities

Since September 2019 the Secretariat has received the following voluntary contributions:

- In December 2019, a one-year contract for €200,000 was signed with the European Union to continue improving the capacity of developing countries. It covers the activities of the *Recommendation by ICCAT Amending Recommendation 11-26 on the Establishment of a Meeting Participation Fund for Developing ICCAT Contracting Parties* (Rec. 14-14).
- In December 2019, a new one-year contract was signed with the European Union, to continue strengthening the scientific basis for decision-making in ICCAT. This contract, for a total amount of €1,075,550.00, includes a voluntary contribution from the European Union (€850,000.00) for ICCAT scientific activities.
- Also in December 2019, a contract was signed with the European Union to support the upcoming Intersessional Meeting of the Panel 1. This contract includes a voluntary contribution of €85,000.00 from the European Union.
- In February 2020, Chinese Taipei notified the Secretariat that it will provide a voluntary contribution of €111,000.00 for 2020 activities.
- The EU and the FAO Common Ocean/ABNJ Tuna Project co-funded the December 2019 joint-tRFMO Bycatch Working Group Meeting in the amounts of €200,000.00 and €40,000.00, respectively. These funds enabled the participation of 9 experts and 32 delegates from 18 countries.

OTHER NEWS



Dr Valérie Samedy was recently appointed as VMS Manager/Technical Officer. The Secretariat would like to wish her a warm welcome.

26TH REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMISSION IN IMAGES

Ms. Deirdre Warner Kramer, Chair of the Working Group on Convention Amendment signing the Protocol (right).



On his retirement, in a farewell ceremony, the Commission paid tribute to Mr. Aronne Spezzani, a European Union delegate who has collaborated closely with ICCAT during his career.



Presentation of a farewell gift to Mr. Spezzani during the 26th Regular Meeting of the Commission (left).



Mr. Juan Antonio Moreno, Head of Administration and Finance, announced that this would be his last Commission meeting, but that he would continue to work at the Secretariat for a while to ensure an orderly transfer of the department's responsibilities.

The Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance and Administration (STACFAD) and the Executive Secretary expressed their appreciation for his excellent work and dedication to the Secretariat over the past 45 years, which was seconded by all the delegates at the Commission.



Presentation of a farewell gift to Mr. Moreno during the 26th Regular Meeting of the Commission, held in November 2019, in Palma de Mallorca (above).

During the 26th Regular Meeting of the Commission, it was agreed that the **22nd Special Meeting of the Commission** will be held in Antalya, Turkey, (23-30 November 2020).