

ICCAT GBYP STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT

Madrid, 26 September 2015

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting of the Steering Committee was held at the ICCAT Secretariat in Madrid on September 26, 2015, with the participation of Messrs. Sylvain Bonhommeau, David Die, Driss Meski and Yukio Takeuchi. Paul de Bruyn (ICCAT Statistical Department), Antonio Di Natale (GBYP Coordinator), Laurie Kell (ICCAT Population Dynamics Expert), Alfonso Pagá García (GBYP Data Base Expert), Clay Porch (SCRS BFT Chair) and Stasa Tensek (GBYP Coordinator Assistant), also attended the meeting, invited by the Steering Committee.

Before starting the meeting, ICCAT Executive Secretary welcomed all participants on behalf of the ICCAT Secretariat. The ICCAT GBYP Steering Committee meeting was chaired by SCRS Chair and GBYP Coordinator Assistant was appointed for taking minutes from the meeting. It was decided to attach a short report from the meeting to the document SCI-039/2015 which would be presented to the SCRS on 30 September 2015, namely the list of planned activities for the following GBYP phase and possibly a draft budget foreseen for each activity.

The tentative agenda for the meeting, as proposed by the GBYP Coordinator (Annex 1), was approved and each SC member was provided with the documents prepared by the GBYP Coordinator, for their revision (Report from the last SC meeting, SCRS/2015/143, SCRS/2015/144, SCRS/2015/145 SCRS/2015/146, SCRS/2015/149, SCRS/2015/147, SCRS/2015/208 and SCI 039/2015).

2. Overall Project review

Before proceeding with the agenda, the Executive Secretary drew participants' attention to the fact that the GBYP was first foreseen as a six year project and, although its continuation has already been approved by the SCRS and the Commission, Phase 6 should be considered as the last phase of the original project. He proposed that any future phase should be somehow separated from the ones identified through the original plan and that it may not necessarily follow the same scheme set at the beginning.

The SC considers the GBYP project to be an essential tool for carrying out continuous research on Atlantic bluefin tuna that is crucial for the successful management of the species. However, it recognised the need for reviewing the work carried out to date and evaluating the effectiveness of this complex research programme. To this end, the SC proposed to carry out cost-benefit analyses to determine the utility of the information collected from the various programs to the work of the SCRS. These analyses are an essential step prior to making any important decision or changing a work plan and a key element for the Final review of the first Phases. It was decided to present the GBYP Final review of the first Phases at the SCRS 2016 meeting, for its evaluation and feedback. The final report will then be presented to the Commission in 2016.

3. Short Review of the GBYP activities in Phase 5

The GBYP Coordinator gave a short review of the GBYP activities carried out in Phase 5 and their results, including the genetic data mining, the aerial survey, the biological studies, the tagging activities and the modelling approaches. Particular attention was given to the fact that one of the companies engaged in the aerial survey in 2015 had problems in providing all data as required. Many incoherencies and mistakes were found on the electronic files, therefore, the first part of the comprehensive analytical work had problems in providing the necessary results. All necessary formal steps have been already taken for possibly solving this situation, which is creating very serious problems, due to the scientific observers used as subcontractors by this company.

Beside any contractual possible action, the GBYP coordination has set a sort of emergency plan for recovering the necessary data, but this action will require some additional time and an unforeseen workload.

Since May 2015, two additional staff have been hired within GBYP to help the coordination and the data management. Stasa Tensek assists the scientific coordinator for the management of the scientific activities and Alfonso Pagá Garcia is in charge of the development of a database linked to ICCAT database to store and make easy access to the data collected during GBYP activities.

The GBYP Coordinator also informed the SC members that, regarding the GBYP budget, some of the CPCs which had committed to provide funds have yet to do so. An unexpected donation from the USA, , together with some residual funds from previous Phases, should compensate the amounts committed which were not received and therefore allow the Programme to use about the full budget set for Phase 5.

4. Status of the previous SC report

The SCRS Chair offered himself as volunteer to review the report from the previous SC meeting (February 2015), make a consolidated version and circulate it among the SC members. It was decided to improve the SC procedure for the meeting reports and for providing comments to any proposal received from the GBYP Coordination, in order to make it easier and speed-up the finalisation process. In case of any correspondence circulated between the SC members, the GBYP Coordination should be responsible for incorporating the comments into the draft text, while the absence of the comments should be considered as the proposal was accepted and should be carried out. In case of contradictory comments or proposals, the SCRS Chair will decide which comment or proposal will be accepted.

5. Possible activities between October and February

5.1 Cost/Benefit/Power analysis

Contracts for cost/benefit analyses (including statistical power analyses) of the various programs (tagging, aerial survey and biological sampling) will be issued as soon as possible. The contract for the cost/benefit analysis of the aerial survey will be coordinated by the secretariat and should be completed before the end of Phase 5. (February 23, 2016). This job is foreseen for two people and for a period of at least two months. Sylvain Bonhommeau and Laurie Kell were

appointed to provide a list of potential experts who would be able to carry out the task within the given timeframe.

5.2 Modelling MSE Approaches

The SC identified again the MSE Modelling as one of the key components of the GBYP project and affirmed its long term support to this activity in future GBYP phases. It recognized as well the delay in the MSE modelling activities schedule, which was attributed to the internal reorganization of the MSE team and the need of having a new Modelling MSE Coordinator. The Executive Secretary proposed to have the next GBYP Modelling MSE meeting in Monterey (USA), just after the Bluefin Tuna Symposium which is planned in January 2016. The Modelling Coordinator already offered to carry out all necessary preliminary contacts, for finding a proper location and for making this meeting possible. The SC discussed and approved the proposal. The GBYP coordination was appointed to work in strict contact with the Modelling Coordinator and for arranging the logistics for organising the event and for allocating the necessary budget, up to a maximum of 40,000 euro.

The SC considered that it is important to initiate the dialog with the stake holders involved in the BFT management in parallel with the ongoing MSE activity.

Some SC members proposed to identify a small and limited dialog working group to which the MSE results will be presented and which would spread the knowledge on MSE later to a wider group, including the Commissioners and other managers which are not necessarily part of the Commission. The dialog should be interactive and the MSE experts should provide for the occasion some simple and practical tools to demonstrate the MSE effectiveness. The members of the initial dialog working group will be identified according to their professional experience and they will not represent the Commission.

One participant noted recent similar recommendations made by the IOTC methods working group :

- “The progress of the MSE process will benefit from having communication more formally structured, for example, through a dedicated Technical Committee on MSE that would serve as an effective two-way channel for scientists to communicate the results of the ongoing MSE work and receive feedback from the Commission. Such a Technical Committee on MSE would require specific terms of reference in line with the priorities identified in the relevant Resolution, and could meet for two days, immediately prior to the annual Commission Session, to facilitate full attendance by CPCs.
- The Technical Committee on MSE would not replace the role of the Scientific Committee that remains the main subsidiary body dealing with technical issues, such as reviewing technical aspects of the operating models. The Technical Committee on MSE would rather augment the ability of the Scientific Committee to communicate the progress of the MSE process.
- The Technical Committee on MSE would focus on the presentation of results and exchange of information necessary for the Commission to consider possible adoption of harvest strategies, utilizing standard formats for the presentation of results to facilitate understanding of the material by the non-technical audience.
- It would be advisable that the agenda of the Technical Committee on MSE would place an emphasis on the elements of each species MSE that require a

decision by the Commission. To facilitate such decisions, wherever necessary, interim choices should be offered to the Commission, noting that these choices can be modified at a later stage in the review. The MSE is an iterative process that allows for adjustments as the work, and the understanding of the elements involved, progresses. “

Laurie Kell and Joe Powers were appointed to provide the provisional list of participants to this small dialog group. It was decided to inform the Commissioners of this activity at the Commission Meeting in 2015, explaining the objectives and the way it was planned forming the working groups and proceed with the dialog.

5.3 Close-kin genetic study

Although the SC pointed out the importance of a close kin genetic study, it recognized the possible difficulties in carrying out this study, namely finding an appropriate expert who would have enough experience both on genetic tagging and on the BFT fisheries in the ICCAT convention area (mostly for the eastern stock). Given the fact that this type of study should be done on a wide Atlantic-Mediterranean area, performing the sampling on as much localities as possible, the SC also expressed concerns regarding the logistical constraints such as restricted access to some areas, fisheries or farming activities. Following the unsuccessful release of two call for tenders so far, it was decided to release direct requests, circulating the ToRs, but given the time frame limitations the SC decided to split the study in two separate but effectively linked parts (feasibility study and sampling design in the first part, and definition of genetic markers and possible necessary budget for the activities to be performed for the second part) and to award a contract only for performing the first part. Due to the fact there is a limited number of experts able to carry out this tasks, the SC members were committed to provide a list of potential candidates to whom the ToRs will be directly forwarded by the GBYP Coordinator, who will also provide the GBYP assistance for sharing all available knowledge about the many bluefin tuna fisheries and the various potential logistic constraints for carrying out the necessary sampling activities.

5.4 Data recovery

It was decided to continue processing data from ancient traps, using the ICCAT methodology as agreed with the SCRS BFT Species Group and the Subcomstat. As soon as this work will be fully completed and verified, then it will be possible to cross check these data sets with the already existing GBYP trap data base, for eliminating duplicates, filling holes and verify and resolve any possible discrepancy, for finally incorporate this long list of data in the ICCAT BFT data base as agreed. New trap data from 1950 on will be agreed with national scientists when necessary.

5.5 Electronic tags analysis

The GBYP Coordinator informed the SC that the full data sets for some electronic tags which remained at sea for less than 19 days in previous GBYP Phases can now be processed according to improved software by CLS. The number of these tags is still to be exactly defined, but it will be very limited; at the same time, the amount requested by CLS for processing these data will be much lower than a normal amount, but it will depend by the total number of tags. The SC agreed to get all detailed data during the last part of Phase 5 and include these costs under the budget item for Tagging.

5.6 Phase 5 budget reallocation

The GBYP Coordinator pointed out the need for amending as soon as possible the Grant Agreement with the European Union, for reflecting the activities as they were redefined by the SC in February and as they were carried out so far.

The SC decided to improve the budget allocation set for the Modelling MSE meeting (logistic, travels and accommodation) up to 40.000 euro. Furthermore, the SC allocated a maximum of 40,000 euro for the overall power analysis. The budget for other budget items will be revised by the GBYP Coordinator according to the effective costs.

Since it is likely that not all the budget set for Phase 5 will be spent for all the activities included so far, the SC recommended to spend all possible residuals for buying additional electronic tags.

6. Activities for Phase 6 and related budget

Regarding the activities planned for Phase 6, although the results of the comprehensive power analysis will be crucial for determining the final activities that will be carried out, it was decided to prepare the initial plan of activities, as flexible as possible, and to continue pursuing the funding mechanisms, which needs time anyway. The GBYP Coordinator was appointed to make a tentative plan of activities and related budget that will be presented to the SCRS. At this first step, the budget will be presented for general budget items only (Coordination, Data mining, Aerial survey, Biological studies, Tagging, Modelling Approaches), while individual and detailed budget components will be discussed after.

The SC recommends that the coordination activities shall continue with the current level of support and continuity of staff.

6.1 Final review for the original Phases

The Final review for the original GBYP Phases shall be carried out in Phase 6, and completed before the 2016 SCRS meeting. As it was done for the mid-term review, external expert(s) should be identified and contracted for carrying out this important task. It was decided to set a preliminary estimate budget of 50.000 euro for this specific item, to be included under the Coordination costs. Results from the cost/benefit analyses should form an integral part of the Final review for the first original GBYP Phases.

6.2 Data recovery

The SC asked the GBYP Coordinator if it will necessary to continue with any historical genetic recovery study, but no further activities are envisaged for this item in Phase 6.

The GBYP Coordinator informed the SC of a new data set found in the Canary Islands which might be interesting for the project and might provide a new insight on tuna catches for a fishery which escaped from any previous statistics. Furthermore, it seems that additional size/weight data sets, concerning some recent years of Mediterranean BFT LL can be successfully recovered, as well as few additional historical trap data sets that were previously not available. Considering that these data sets can be useful for further improving the data collected so far, the SC agreed to recommend recovering them, setting a budget level for Phase 6 close to the one used in Phase 5.

6.3 Biological studies

Biological sampling and analyses were identified as one of the most successful components of GBYP, although it was acknowledged that the original design was not completely met due to the relatively small number of samples from purse seines/farms in the Mediterranean, which is important for defining the age/length key. Furthermore, the lack of access to some areas created additional problems, only partly resolved in one year. Although the final detailed plan for Phase 6 has not been set yet, it was recognized that the continuing sampling should be performed every year, independently from any level of analyses. Furthermore, the SC insisted about the need for carrying out a second ageing calibration. Additionally, it was considered that a comprehensive data base should be established within the ICCAT, of the biological samples collected so far and the analyses performed within the GBYP framework. The GBYP Coordinator stated that this data base is already within the list of future data bases which was discussed with the ICCAT Statistical Department, the preliminary work is in progress and a draft structure will be proposed by the Consortium contracted for the Biological Studies at the end of Phase 5. This data base will be very complex, due to the many types of different files and metafiles that should be included; in any case, a GBYP tissue data base was already established since Phase 2 and it is currently maintained by AZTI; all samples have a unique ID code that can be used for the comprehensive data base.

The SC recommended to have the bluefin tuna larvae workshop that was moved from Phase 5 to Phase 6 and to allocate about 20.000 euro for that purpose.

6.4 Aerial survey

The SC recognized the great logistical constraints for performing the extended aerial survey as it was requested by the SC in previous meetings, namely because of several restricted areas, new security rules and an insufficient budget. Given the fact that the extended survey coverage in terms of replicas was seriously reduced (particularly in the “outside” areas), the effectiveness and reliability of the results of such a limited survey can provide were seriously questioned. The SC agreed that any decision about the continuation of the aerial survey and its scale and frequency is conditioned upon the results of the power analysis that shall be provided before the end of Phase 5. Nevertheless, since the plan for Phase 6 should be presented before the results of the power analysis get available, it was recommended to reserve the budget for this activity in 2016, but only for surveying the four core spawning areas with a sufficient number of replicates. The SC agreed that the GBYP plans for the aerial survey in Phase 6 should be reassessed in light of the cost-benefit analysis and, if necessary, that the corresponding budget should be reallocated for improving other budget items, even if this will necessarily implies an amendment to the EU Grant Agreement that will be signed before the beginning of Phase 6.

6.5 Tagging

The SC recognised the fact that was not possible to follow the original tagging design due to the same logistical constraints encountered for performing the aerial survey or for the biological samplings and questioned the conventional tagging results provided so far due to the fact that the Mediterranean-wide coverage cannot be obtained and the tag recovery rate from the fisheries is still low (albeit remarkably improved in the last year). The SC mentioned that it would be useful to initiate a PIT tagging, but given the current legislation in Japan, it appears impossible. The GBYP Coordinator informed again that there are 40 unused PIT tag readers left from previous phases which can be sold and the SC agreed to try to find any possible buyer and use any income as additional co-funding. The SC recommended to provisionally include in the budget only the electronic tagging activities, a sufficient number of tags and the related services.

More details about the activities to be carried out will be set before presenting the final plan of the activities for Phase 6 for funding.

The SC recognised a great importance to the tag awareness campaign for improving the tag recovery rate, especially having in mind that a great deal of tagging was carried out mostly on juveniles within the GBYP activities and that these fish will possibly enter in the official fisheries quite soon. It was recommended to maintain a strong reward campaign and even reallocate more money for that purpose. The SC stressed that the campaign needs to continue regardless if the following conventional tagging activities will be carried out or not. The GBYP Coordinator proposed intensifying the activity by making a short video spot which would be distributed to coastal countries TV stations for free, translated in many languages, but the cost for this production should be assessed. The SC agreed about this proposal and asked the GBYP Coordinator to get a preliminary assessment of the cost and include it on the provisional budget for Phase 6 if it is within a reasonable amount.

As concerns the close-kin genetic study, the SC recommended to possibly release the contract for the second part of the close kin genetic study (definition of genetic markers and related budget for performing the necessary activities) within Phase 6, to the same expert(s) already awarded for carrying out the first part of the study in Phase 5. The decision about any activation of the close-kin genetic field activity in Phase 6 will be taken after the full feasibility study will be available along with a budget.

6.6 Modelling MSE Approaches

The SC strongly supported the continuation of ongoing MSE modelling activity and decided to allocate to this activity a similar budget as in the previous phase. As well, it considered crucial the prolonged contract arrangements of the MSE key experts (Joe Powers and Tom Carruthers). In order to ensure continuity, it was recommended to extend the contracts of the key experts and possibly sign a new contract with them in strict continuity, avoiding any time hole.

7. Other matters

The SC pointed out that it should be necessary to strongly improve the functioning of the Committee, particularly between meetings.

The SC decided that a summary of this meeting should be possibly attached to the document SCI/2015/039, which presents the overview of the GBYP activities to the SCRS and that will be later presented to the Commission. The Chair will provide the summary to the GBYP Coordinator over the week-end.

The Executive Secretary circulated a document about the views of the ICCAT Secretariat about the GBYP activities carried out so far, for the inclusion in the SCI document.

ICCAT GBYP STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

ICCAT Secretariat

Saturday 26 September 2015, 9:00 a.m.

TENTATIVE AGENDA

1. Short Review of the GBYP activities in Phase 5
2. Status of the previous SC report
3. Possible activities between October and February
 - 3.1 Close-kin study: how to go on?
 - 3.2 Any additional tagging somewhere?
 - 3.3 Analysis of electronic tags from previous Phase which stayed at sea for less than 19 days.
 - 3.4 Review of the budget previously approved, for the submission to EU for a grant amendment
4. Activities for Phase 6 and related budget (to be presented to SCRS)
5. Other matters