

Original: English

**DRAFT RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT TO ESTABLISH
HARVEST CONTROL RULES FOR THE NORTH
ATLANTIC ALBACORE STOCK**

(Proposal by Canada, the European Union and Norway)

RECALLING the *Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT concerning the North Atlantic Albacore Rebuilding Program* [Rec.13-05];

NOTING that the objective of the Convention is to maintain populations at levels that will support maximum sustainable catch (usually referred to as MSY);

CONSIDERING that the 2013 Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) stock assessment concluded that the northern albacore stock is overfished but that overfishing is not occurring, and advised that a level of catch of 28,000 t would meet the Convention management objective by 2020 with a 53% probability;

CONSIDERING that the Standing Working Group to Enhance Dialogue between Fisheries Scientists and Managers (SWGSM) has proposed, among other case studies, the northern albacore stock as a suitable candidate to examine harvest control rules;

NOTING the progress achieved so far by the SCRS in the work for testing harvest control rules and conducting management strategy evaluations for northern albacore and in particular the Kobe II Strategy matrix showing the different levels of probability of being in the green quadrant for different combinations of reference point values;

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

1. The management objective for northern albacore stock is
 - a. to maintain the stock in the green zone of the Kobe plot, with at least a 60% probability, while maximizing long-term yield from the fishery, and
 - b. where the spawning stock biomass (SSB) has been assessed by the SCRS as below the level capable of producing MSY (SSB_{MSY}), to rebuild SSB to or above SSB_{MSY} , with at least a 60% probability, and within as short time as possible, by 2020 at the latest, while maximizing average catch and minimizing inter-annual fluctuations in TAC levels.
2. In 2016, the SCRS shall identify and test candidate reference points (e.g., $SSB_{THRESHOLD}$, SSB_{LIM} and F_{TARGET}) and associated harvest control rules (HCRs) that would support the management objective expressed in paragraph 1 above and/or any other management objectives agreed by the Commission.
3. The result of the analyses described in paragraph 2 will be discussed in a dialogue between scientists and managers to be organised in 2016, either during a meeting of the SWGSM or as an inter-sessional meeting of Panel 2.
4. Based on the SCRS inputs and advice provided pursuant to paragraph 2 above and the dialogue process indicated in paragraph 3, the Commission shall then adopt HCR for the northern albacore stock, including pre-agreed management actions to be taken under various stock conditions. For this specific purpose, the management actions below will be considered by the Commission and updated as necessary:

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- a. If the average spawning stock biomass (SSB) level is less than SSB_{LIM} (*i.e.*, $SSB < SSB_{LIM}$), the Commission shall adopt severe management actions immediately to reduce the fishing mortality rate, including measures that suspend the fishery and initiate a scientific monitoring quota to be able to evaluate stock status. This scientific monitoring quota shall be set at the lowest possible level to be effective. The Commission shall not consider re-opening the fishery until the average SSB level exceeds SSB_{LIM} with a high probability. Further, before reopening the fishery, the Commission shall develop a rebuilding program in order to ensure that the stock returns to the green zone of the Kobe plot.
 - b. If the average SSB level is equal to or less than $SSB_{THRESHOLD}$ and equal to or above SSB_{LIM} (*i.e.*, $SSB_{LIM} \leq SSB \leq SSB_{THRESHOLD}$) and F is above the level specified in the HCR, the Commission shall take steps to reduce F as specified in the HCR to ensure F is at a level that will rebuild SSB to SSB_{MSY} or above that level.
 - c. If the average SSB is above $SSB_{THRESHOLD}$ but F exceeds F_{TARGET} (*i.e.*, $SSB > SSB_{THRESHOLD}$ and $F > F_{TARGET}$), the Commission shall immediately take steps to reduce F to F_{TARGET} .
 - d. Once the average SSB level reaches or exceeds $SSB_{THRESHOLD}$ and F is less or equal than F_{TARGET} (*i.e.*, $SSB > SSB_{THRESHOLD}$ and $F \leq F_{TARGET}$), the Commission shall assure that applied management measures will maintain F at or below F_{TARGET} .
5. These HCRs should be evaluated by SCRS through the management strategy evaluation process, including in light of new assessments of the stock. The Commission shall review the results of these evaluations and make adjustments to the HCRs as needed.

Generic form of the HCR recommended by SCRS in 2010 that would be consistent with UNFSA (Report of the 2010 WGSAM)

