

**Original: English**

**LETTER FROM ALBANIA REQUESTING AN INCREASE OF BLUEFIN TUNA QUOTA**

Dear Executive Secretary,

First of all I would like to thank you for the support that you and ICCAT staff has given to our authorities during these years, in order that Albanian authorities to follow and implement all recommendations and resolutions of this important Regional Fisheries Management Organization.

On behalf of the Albanian Government, I have the honor to submit a request for the increase of the quota of bluefin tuna for Albania.

Albania is a member of the ICCAT since 2008 and during this period has sought to fulfil all the obligations that membership in ICCAT brings. Let me assure you that in the future the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in this direction will be the maximum in order that the bluefin tuna fishing activity to continue to be in a sustainable way and in accordance with the relevant international instruments and ICCAT.

Today, after 10 years of membership on ICCAT, we have almost the same quota as at the beginning, but now we have more experience in the management of such fishing activity. Of course, in the moments in which the quota has had a downward tendency over the years, this demand would be out of context, but today under the conditions when the successful management measures taken by ICCAT have led to a tendency to rebuild the stocks, we hope that this demand will to have a positive response.

The quota is too small and as such does not promote investment in the sector, either for the catch or for its processing. In the last two years, fishing activity has encountered problems related to the existence of a single fishing vessel, which under conditions where it cannot make joint fishing operations with EU countries, which provide a high level of management and control of fishing activity, has encountered difficulty in fishing of Albania quota, while jeopardizing its fishing. During 2016 and 2017, the quota was fished only on the last day (days) of the fishing season and during 2017 a vessel's defect in the fishing season, seriously jeopardized its fishing.

Taking into consideration the economic dimension of bluefin tuna fishing, Albania as a developing State of the region sees this activity as a field that can create prosperity and employment, contributing to growth of the economy of the country.