

Eastern Atlantic Sustainable Tuna Initiative - EASTI



Dear Delegates,

The vessel owners and industry participants of fishery improvement projects (FIPs) in the Atlantic Ocean submit this letter in line with the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) and the Global Tuna Sustainability Appeal to acknowledge progress to date in ICCAT and encourage additional support for measures that will further tuna conservation at the Commission meeting beginning November 12, 2018.

The priorities reflected here, including the comprehensive management of tropical tunas, are included in the FIP to help the fishery be eligible to meet the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard for certification.

Precautionary harvest strategies

The work done to date on a harvest control rule for North Atlantic Albacore serves as a successful precedent for ICCAT to implement a comprehensive harvest strategy for all tuna stocks.

The role of management strategy evaluation (MSE) is integral to support precautionary and effective harvest strategies. We seek member state delegations to advocate and ensure sufficient funding so that the MSE processes can be completed in the planned timeframe.

Additional work to validate the catch per unit effort (CPUE) of long line vessels is needed and can improve gaps in information on catch due to limited observer coverage and improve management across gear types.

Reduce environmental impact

The purse seine FIPs are committed to providing FAD data that improves the scientific monitoring and management of fisheries with FAD usage. The improved definitions and data reporting form based on the SCRS recommendations must be adopted with provisions to ensure compliance.

Additional measures must also be taken to mitigate incidental catch and maximize release survival of sharks, mobulid rays, and sea turtles, including adopting best practices for handling and release as in other tuna RFMOs.

Effective and fair enforcement

The lack of complete total allowable catch (TAC) accountability makes it difficult for the Commission to take corrective measures that address overfishing of bigeye and yellowfin, where both TACs have been exceeded in recent years. Management measures must be adopted for yellowfin and bigeye consistent with SCRS advice.

Interim measures should be applied to manage capacity through closed vessel registries and ensure that stocks are maintained at target reference levels where the probability of breaching limit reference points is low.

Alternative measures to reduce juvenile mortality of bigeye and yellowfin tuna in the purse seine fishery should also be considered, and in-season monitoring of catches could be adopted to help avoid overshooting of catch limits.

Making the schedule of actions to improve compliance binding will ensure a strong compliance process and contribute to transparent, fair, and effective enforcement in ICCAT.

Observer safety and security

The minimum levels of observer coverage for all major fishing gears should be increased to 20% based on SCRS recommendations and compliance strengthened. The large-scale purse seine vessels represented here continue to implement 100% observer coverage voluntarily, and the FAD Working Group recommendation that 100% observer coverage extend to cover all purse seine fleets year-round should be considered.

New binding measures should be adopted to better ensure observer safety, including those on carrier vessels.