



ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS  
OF FISHING ENTERPRISES IN THE EU

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**Europêche position on ICCAT negotiations 2019**  
**Atlantic Bigeye Tuna**

**Background**

According to the latest ICCAT's scientific stock assessment (SCRS 2019), Atlantic Bigeye tuna (BET) remains overfished. Europêche recalls that the European purse seine fleet has respected the quota allocated for this species since it was established and its share has been dropping constantly in the past 5 years, want to reinstate its compromise to rebuild the bigeye tuna stock in order to maintain the socio-economic sustainability of EU fishing companies, their crews, and the coastal communities that depend on it. Conscious that the recovery of the bigeye tuna requires a fair burden sharing between all vessels targeting this species, the BET stock demands a balanced effort, sacrifice, and contributions of all gears targeting this species.

European purse seiners, which represent less than 30% of the catches of bigeye tuna in the Atlantic, are ready to take on their share of responsibility. Europêche draws attention to the fact that all ICCAT contracting parties shall adopt equally distributed measures aimed at a quick recovery of the stock, especially for the Asian longliners which account for nearly 50% of the catches.

For that purpose, European purse seiners are willing to accept, *inter alia*, a progressive reduction in the number of active Fishing Aggregated Devices (FADs) per vessel when recommended and in line with the best available scientific advice.

Europêche calls for a fair and holistic application of ICCAT management measures, meaning that the part of the TAC overshooting generated by some contracting parties who misreport data cannot be compensated by the rest of the fleet, especially those who have been complying with the catch limits like the EU purse-seine fleet. In this direction, the provision of data should be linked to access to quotas. For this purpose, Europêche fully supports the proposal to include the clause "*no data no fish*" for credibility and sound fisheries management.

## EUROPECHE recommendations

### ▪ Catch limits

To end overfishing and allow for stock recovery in accordance with Rec. 11/13, Européche proposes to maintain a **TAC of 65 000 tons for 2020, 2021 and 2022 for all CPCs that are catching at least 1 250 tons of BET in the recent period** (the large majority of catches will be covered by quota) **and integrate in the CPCs' group subject to quota all CPCs flagging large purse seiners and longliners over 40 m LOA**. Such TAC already implies a reduction of the current catches by 20 %.

This allocation could consider:

- The current reference period for current CPCs with a catch limit;
- A different and more recent reference period for current non-quota CPCs;
- An additional replenishment premium for developing CPCs, if the stock is rebuilt;
- Condition any quota allocation to the reporting of fisheries data by all CPCs (no data = no quota).

In addition:

- CPCs would not be subject to quota if BET catches are below 1 250 tons;
- The maximum quantity that a CPC may carry over in any given year shall not exceed 5% of its annual initial catch limit.

Europêche recalls that the longline fleets account for about 50% of the BET total catches and that there are important gaps in terms of information regarding exploitation rates based on abundance indexes (CPUE), total catches and the number of juveniles caught by non-EU longliners. This is mainly due to misreporting and even non-reporting of juvenile BET tuna as a result of discarding practices.

In order to improve future BET SCRS assessment and avoid practices of high-grading, Européche proposes to **extend ICCAT recommendation 17-01 on prohibition of discards of tropical tunas caught by purse seiners to all vessels fishing bigeye tuna**.

### ▪ Capacity management measures

Europêche proposes to apply an effective capacity freeze of the tropical tuna fleet to the current capacity limitation set in Rec. 16-01, and offer the opportunity to developing countries to develop their fleet, provided they present a fleet development plan. Clear deadlines for the regulation of the active fleet shall be established for those CPCs catching tropical tunas using all types of fishing gears.

The European fishing industry is concerned about the exponential increase of fishing capacity in certain Western Africa countries. This uncontrolled expansion is mainly due to the export of fishing capacity from Asian countries. Against this background, the restriction of their fleet capacity must be a pre-condition for any fleet development authorisation. Otherwise, this would be catastrophic for the responsible fisheries management of tropical tunas in the Atlantic and create unfair competition. For this purpose, Européche urge CPCs to freeze the current numbers of industrial tuna purse seiners and long liners and to prevent indiscriminate expansion of fishing capacity in Africa.

Europêche proposes to **extend capacity management measures to all vessels >20m LOA fishing bigeye tuna in the Convention area**, in order to prevent transfers from other oceans to the Atlantic.

- **Management of FADs**

Europêche recommends a balanced approach to tackle efficiently capacity issues and be cost-effective from a perspective of efficacy of monitoring, control and surveillance activities.

Europêche notes that the SCRS preliminary results show that the FAD closure set for the Gulf of Guinea has proved to be ineffective to reduce fishing mortality in the area. According to the scientific advice, there has been an increase of effort displacement from fleets to areas outside the FAD closure area (number of seiners, number of FAD operations, etc.). Unless additional measures are adopted to counteract these effects, the measure will remain ineffective.

**Europêche is opposed to an extension of the FAD closure to the entire ICCAT Convention area during three months.** This measure would have significant socio-economic and trade impacts, due to offer-demand imbalances.

Europêche proposes to limit the number of operational FAD-associated buoys to 400 per vessel and progressively reduce the number of FAD-associated buoys only when recommended by science. This would represent a 20% fishing effort reduction with regard to the current situation. FADs shall be activated on the vessel at the time of their deployment and shall be considered as operational until they are retrieved or lost.

Europêche is against limiting sets on floating objects, due to nil sets that sometimes occur and the economic consequences thereby.

Furthermore, Europêche supports the use of non-entangling FADs as mandatory from 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2020 and encourages the use of biodegradable FAD although emphasize that current trials confirm that (all round) fit for purpose biodegradable materials do not exist yet.

- **Control measures**

Europêche calls for the **prohibition of transshipment operations at sea** and supports the obligation to land all catches in designated ports for all vessels. This would effectively prevent illegal fishing practices and ensure compliance in terms of reporting and declarations of landings, particularly by non-EU long line fleets.

Europêche considers it essential to have adequate monitoring as well as controllable and enforceable measures. For that purpose, the fishing industry proposes **to increase ICCAT minimum observer coverage** to all CPCs, up to 100% for purse seiners. As for longliners, the industry strongly calls to move from 5% to at least 20% for next year, with the ultimate goal of reaching 100% in a progressive manner (by means of human or CCTV technology), particularly for those authorized to fish BET.