



## ICCAT Press Release

# ICCAT agreed a new management plan for tropical tunas and to amend the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, providing a mandate to manage oceanic sharks and rays

### 26th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas

25 November 2019, Palma de Mallorca, Spain – Just a few miles away from one of the favourite spawning grounds of the “king of the seas”, the Atlantic bluefin tuna, in the beautiful city of Palma de Mallorca (Balearic Islands, Spain), ICCAT (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas) has adopted a new multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas. In addition, ICCAT has agreed to amend the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, which modernizes the Commission and provides ICCAT with the mandate to manage oceanic, pelagic, and highly migratory species of sharks and rays.

The beautiful Bay of Palma (Balearic Islands, Spain) has been the setting of the 26th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). Palma de Mallorca was officially founded by the Romans in 123 BC and was the port used for destinations in Africa. The “king of the seas”, the Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna, has always been a regular visitor, since the Balearic Islands are amongst its favorite spawning grounds.

The Commission convened to evaluate the results of the 2019 working plan together with the current status of application of the regulatory measures in force and to establish the conservation and management measures for the future. In 2019, full scientific stock assessments were carried out for two species: **yellowfin tuna** (*Thunnus albacares*) and **white marlin** (*Tetrapturus albidus*), while new projections were provided for the **shortfin mako** shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*). In total, 12 new Recommendations and five Resolutions were adopted covering relevant issues on Atlantic tuna and tuna-like species conservation and fisheries management.

The Commission finalized the protocol to amend the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, which had been developed over the past six years. The new text modernizes the Commission and provides a mandate to manage oceanic sharks and rays.



## INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC TUNAS

A wave of cooperation allowed for significant improvements in the discussions and the adoption of a new multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas. The Commission agreed a TAC for bigeye tuna of 62,500 t and 61,500 t, for 2020 and 2021, respectively. The annual TAC for yellowfin will remain at the current level of 110,000 t. In addition, in order to reduce the fishing mortality of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna, it was also agreed to reduce the maximum number of fish aggregating devices (FADs) deployed by vessels and to prohibit the use of FADs for two and three months in 2020 and 2021, respectively. In early 2020, the Commission will discuss additional measures for the multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas.

Several conservation and management measures were adopted for sharks, with special attention being dedicated to the shortfin mako. The Commission could not reach a consensus on the annual catch limits, but agreed to impose restrictions for vessels to catch and retain on board, transship or land North Atlantic shortfin mako. The Commission also agreed to hold an intersessional meeting in 2020 to develop and propose additional measures towards achieving conservation and management objectives for this stock. For the first time ICCAT established annual TACs for blue shark, of 39,102 t and 28,923 t for North and South Atlantic, respectively.

ICCAT also agreed new rebuilding programs for blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish, with annual limits of 1,670 t for blue marlin and 355 t for white marlin/roundscale spearfish, beginning in 2020.

The Compliance Committee noted that some improvements had been seen overall in compliance and that progress had been made on a strategic plan for future meetings, and that agreement had been reached on continuation of the work on the online reporting system. Additional MCS measures were also taken by the Commission on vessel sightings and important improvements were made in observer safety.

In addition, the Commission officers received a second two-year mandate, however, it was agreed that the European Union and the United States of America will swap chairships, with the European Union chairing the Conservation and Management Measures Compliance Committee (COC) and the United States chairing the Permanent Working for the Improvement of ICCAT Statistics and Conservation Measures (PWG).

The 26th Regular Meeting of ICCAT was opened by Ms. Francina Armengol Socias, President of the Government of the Balearic Islands, who welcomed 680 delegates from 47 Contracting Parties, two cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities; and observers from six non-Contracting Party, six international organisations and 22 Non-Governmental Organizations. The acting Spanish Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Mr. Luis Planas, also attended the opening ceremony. The ICCAT Chair, Mr. Raul Delgado, in his final speech, thanked all Contracting Parties for the commitment with which they had carried out their work and their good will to ensure achievement of the objectives of this Commission: conservation of the tuna and tuna-like stocks. He also signaled that ICCAT needs sound fisheries management to effectively contribute to people's livelihoods.

Finally, ICCAT would like to express its sincerest gratitude to the Government of Spain and the European Union, and to everybody who, directly or indirectly, individually or as representatives, made this meeting possible.

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## 26th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas

### List of adopted Recommendations and Resolutions

- *Recommendation by ICCAT on fishes considered to be tuna and tuna-like species or oceanic, pelagic, and highly migratory elasmobranchs*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT to continue the development of an integrated online reporting system*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT on vessel sightings*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT on protecting the health and safety of observers in ICCAT's regional observer programs*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT on abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 16-01 by ICCAT on a multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 18-02 establishing a multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 16-12 on management measures for the conservation of the North Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT on management measures for the conservation of South Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT to establish rebuilding programs for blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 17-02 by ICCAT for the conservation of North Atlantic swordfish*
- *Recommendation by ICCAT on the conservation of North Atlantic stock of shortfin mako caught in association with ICCAT fisheries*
- *Resolution by ICCAT regarding participation by fishing entities under the amended ICCAT Convention*
- *Resolution by ICCAT on harmonisation and improved observer safety*
- *Resolution by ICCAT amending the Resolution 18-11 by ICCAT establishing a pilot program for the voluntary exchange of inspection personnel in fisheries managed by ICCAT*
- *Resolution by ICCAT establishing an ICCAT Working Group on Bluefin Tuna Control and Traceability Measures*
- *Resolution by ICCAT on development of initial management objectives for North Atlantic swordfish*

Original: English

**DRAFT RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT ON MANAGEMENT MEASURES  
FOR THE CONSERVATION OF SOUTH ATLANTIC BLUE SHARK  
CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH ICCAT FISHERIES**

*Proposal submitted by the European Union*

*RECALLING* that the Commission adopted the *Resolution by ICCAT on Atlantic Sharks* (Res. 01-11), the *Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Conservation of Sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT* (Rec. 04-10), the *Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT concerning Sharks* (Rec. 07-06), including the obligation of CPCs to annually report Task I & II data for sharks in accordance with ICCAT data reporting procedures and the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the Development of Harvest Control Rules and of Management Strategy Evaluation* (Rec. 15-07);

*FURTHER RECALLING* that the Commission has adopted management measures for shark species considered vulnerable to overfishing and caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT;

*RECOGNIZING* that Atlantic blue sharks (*Prionace glauca*) are caught in large numbers in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT;

*CONSIDERING* that in the last stock assessment of South Atlantic blue shark stock, all scenarios with the Bayesian surplus production model estimated that the stock was not overfished and that overfishing was not occurring. However, also noting that the estimates obtained with the state-space surplus production model formulation were generally less optimistic, predicting that the stock could be overfished and overfishing could be occurring in some cases;

*NOTING* that, according to SCRS advice precautionary management measures should be considered for shark stocks for which there are few data and/or greater uncertainty in assessment results;

*CONSIDERING* that given the uncertainty in stock status results for the South Atlantic blue shark, the SCRS strongly recommends the adoption of a precautionary approach for this stock;

*FURTHER CONSIDERING* that in order to protect and manage the South Atlantic blue shark, the SCRS recommends that the average catch of the final five years used in the assessment model (28,923 t for 2009-2013) could be used as an upper limit;

*ACKNOWLEDGING* that catches of blue shark in the South Atlantic have significantly increased in recent years, to values higher than the catch limits recommended by the SCRS;

*RECOGNIZING* the need to stabilize the exploitation patterns for this fishery, in particular to avoid large fluctuations of catches in the future, to the extent possible.

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

1. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities whose vessels fish blue shark in association with ICCAT fisheries in the Convention Area shall implement management measures to ensure the conservation of the South Atlantic blue shark (*Prionace glauca*) in line with ICCAT's Convention objective.

***Catch limits for blue shark***

2. An annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 28,923 t for South Atlantic blue shark is established. The Annual TAC may be revised subject to a decision of the Commission based on the updated advice of the SCRS in 2021, or at an earlier stage if enough information is provided by the SCRS.

**2019 COM**  
**November 24, 2019 (3:09 PM)**

**Doc. No. PA4\_808B / 2019**

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3. On the basis of the stock assessment results, an allocation of the future TAC shall be decided by the Commission by 2021.

***Recording, reporting, and use of the catch information***

4. Each CPC shall ensure that its vessels catching blue shark in association with ICCAT fisheries in the Convention area record their catch in accordance with the requirements set out in the Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Recording of Catch by Fishing Vessels in the ICCAT Convention Area (Rec. 03-13).
5. CPCs shall implement data collection programmes that ensure the reporting of accurate blue shark catch, effort, size and discard data to ICCAT in full accordance with the ICCAT requirements for provision of Task I and Task II.
6. CPCs shall include in their shark implementation check sheet to ICCAT information on the actions they have taken domestically to monitor catches and to conserve and manage blue sharks.

***Scientific Research***

7. CPCs are encouraged to undertake scientific research that would provide information on key biological/ecological parameters, life-history, migrations, post-release survivorship and behavioural traits of blue sharks. Such information shall be made available to the SCRS.
8. In the light of the results of the next stock assessment of blue shark, the SCRS shall provide, if possible, options of HCR with the associated limit, target and threshold reference points for the management of this species in the ICCAT Convention area.

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November 24, 2019 (6:20 PM)

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**DRAFT RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT AMENDING THE RECOMMENDATION 16-12 ON  
MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC BLUE SHARK  
CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH ICCAT FISHERIES**

*Proposal submitted by the European Union*

*RECALLING* that the Commission adopted the *Resolution by ICCAT on Atlantic Sharks* (Res. 01-11), the *Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Conservation of Sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT* [Rec. 04-10], the *Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT concerning Sharks* (Rec. 07-06), including the obligation of CPCs to annually report Task I & II data for sharks in accordance with ICCAT data reporting procedures and the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the Development of Harvest Control Rules and of Management Strategy Evaluation* (Rec. 15-07);

*FURTHER RECALLING* that the Commission has adopted management measures for shark species considered vulnerable to overfishing and caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT;

*RECOGNIZING* that Atlantic blue sharks (*Prionace glauca*) are caught in large numbers in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT;

*CONSIDERING* that following the stock assessment undertaken in 2015, the SCRS report states that despite the positive signs of the stock status of the North Atlantic stock of blue shark, a high level of uncertainty in data inputs and in model structural assumptions remains and, therefore, the possibility of the stock being overfished and overfishing occurring could not be ruled out;

*NOTING* that, according to SCRS advice precautionary management measures should be considered for shark stocks for which there are few data and/or greater uncertainty in assessment results;

*RECOGNIZING that the average of the total reported catch during the period 2011-2015 was 39,102 t;*

*SEEKING, therefore, to ensure that total catch does not exceed 39,102 t through establishment of an annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC);*

*RECALLING* the provisions of *Resolution by ICCAT on Criteria for the Allocation of Fishing Possibilities* (Res. 15-13), notably the criteria for the allocation of fishing possibilities set out in part III, and the need to ensure that these are applied in a fair, equitable and transparent manner;

[...]

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

1. To ensure the conservation of the North Atlantic blue shark stock in the Convention area, the following shall apply:

***TAC and catch limits for blue shark***

2. An annual TAC of 39,102 t for North Atlantic blue shark is established. The Annual TAC may be revised subject to a decision of the Commission based on the updated advice of the SCRS in 2021, or at an earlier stage if enough information is provided by the SCRS.

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3. The following CPCs shall be subject to the following catch limits:

<i>CPC</i>	<i>Quota (t)</i>
EU	32,578
Japan	4,010
Morocco	1,644
[...]	[...]
[...]	[...]

- a) All other CPCs shall endeavor to maintain their catches at recent levels.
- b) If in any year the total catches of the North Atlantic blue shark exceed the TAC, the Commission shall review the implementation of these measures. Based on the review and the results of the next stock assessment scheduled for 2021 or at an earlier stage if enough information is provided to the SCRS, the Commission shall consider introduction of additional measures.

#### ***Recording, reporting, and use of the catch information***

4. Each CPC shall ensure that its vessels catching North Atlantic blue shark in association with ICCAT fisheries in the Convention area record their catch in accordance with the requirements set out in the *Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Recording of Catch by Fishing Vessels in the ICCAT Convention Area* (Rec. 03-13).
5. CPCs shall implement data collection programmes that ensure the reporting of accurate blue shark catch, effort, size and discard data to ICCAT in full accordance with the ICCAT requirements for provision of Task I and Task II data.
6. CPCs shall include in their shark implementation check sheet submitted to ICCAT pursuant to Recommendation 18-06 information on the actions they have taken domestically to monitor catches and to conserve and manage blue sharks.

#### ***Scientific research***

7. CPCs are encouraged to undertake scientific research that would provide information on key biological/ecological parameters, life-history, migrations, post-release survivorship and behavioral traits of blue sharks. Such information shall be made available to the SCRS.
8. In the light of the results of the next stock assessment of blue shark, the SCRS shall provide, if possible, options of HCR with the associated limit, target and threshold reference points for the management of this species in the ICCAT Convention area.

#### ***Implementation and review***

9. This recommendation shall be reviewed in light of the outcomes of the next stock assessment of the North Atlantic blue shark by the SCRS in 2021.
10. This Recommendation repeals and replaces Recommendation by ICCAT on management measures for the conservation of Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries (Rec. 16-12).