



## Highlights of the 2014 International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) Meeting

[Learn more about the outcomes from the meeting.](#)

At the 19<sup>th</sup> Special meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), forty-two of ICCAT's 49 Contracting Parties met and adopted multi-year total allowable catch (TAC) levels for bluefin tuna, amendments to the tropical tunas management measure and terms of reference for the next scientist-manager dialogue meeting. ICCAT also adopted several US-sponsored proposals to further combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, in particular by enhancing the monitoring of ICCAT fisheries through more frequent reporting of vessel positions via vessel monitoring systems, establishing a program to assist developing States in implementing their port inspection responsibilities, clarifying the process for cross-listing IUU vessels from other RFMOs, and harmonizing the requirements in ICCAT's authorized vessel lists. The Compliance Committee reviewed the implementation of ICCAT measures by each of the 49 Contracting Parties. Based on that review, 22 members and 3 non members will receive letters of concern specifying areas that need improvement.

The latest stock assessment for Atlantic bluefin tuna reflected an improvement in the status for both western and eastern Atlantic/Mediterranean stocks. The Commission adopted new management measures that are within the range of scientific advice, are consistent with the respective rebuilding plans, and allow for continued stock growth. For the western stock, the TAC of 2,000 mt annually for 2015 and 2016 will provide for continued growth in spawning stock biomass and allow the strong 2003 year-class to continue to enhance the productivity of the stock. The TAC for the eastern Atlantic/Mediterranean stock was set at 16,142 t for 2015; 19,296 t for 2016; and 23,155 t for 2017. In addition, the extensive monitoring, control and surveillance measures that had originally been adopted to address once-rampant IUU fishing in the eastern fishery were continued with some adjustment.

The Commission also considered the management of tropical tunas, including skipjack, which had been assessed in 2014 by ICCAT's scientific committee. The Commission created a working group to better evaluate the effects of a fishing technique utilizing fish aggregating devices (FADs) on tropical tuna species, in order to improve management advice for this fishery.

Many proposals were introduced for sharks, but only one was adopted. Two draft recommendations related to shortfin mako sharks were considered. The United States, in conjunction with the Republic of Guinea, Senegal, and Mauritania, introduced a proposal to limit overall catches of shortfin mako sharks for the North and South Atlantic stocks based on scientific advice. A similar proposal was introduced by the European Union. Unfortunately, several parties argued that the measure was unnecessary as the stocks

are not currently overfished. The resulting recommendation requires parties to improve domestic data reporting systems and provide additional information to ICCAT about how they monitor and manage catches of shortfin mako sharks, but does not set annual catch limits for these stocks.

The United States, in conjunction with 13 co-sponsors from Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean, as well as the European Union, again introduced a proposal to require that all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached. This proposal was designed to improve conservation by enhancing species-specific data collection and improving the enforceability of ICCAT's existing ban on shark finning. While this proposal continues to gain support, consensus still could not be reached. Two proposals were introduced to improve conservation of porbeagle sharks, but neither was adopted despite efforts to arrive at a compromise.

Support for scientific activities was also clear as the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics presented a five-year strategic plan, and the Commission approved an Atlantic Ocean Tropical Tuna Tagging Program with a total budget of almost 20 million euros over the next 5 years. Finally, ICCAT agreed to hold a second meeting to improve the dialogue between scientists and managers and, in concert, a third meeting of a similar working group established for western bluefin tuna, where efforts to improve the framework for making management decisions will continue.

We continue to strengthen adherence with ICCAT measures and improve the compliance review process, including taking meaningful measures to address non-compliance. Looking ahead to 2015, ICCAT will hold a final meeting of the Convention Amendment Working Group, to be hosted by the United States in May. Other intersessional meetings include a meeting to review each Contracting Party's fishing plans for the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna fishery in late February. It is expected this meeting will be held back-to-back with a meeting of ICCAT's working group on Integrated Monitoring Measures, which will focus on high seas boarding and inspection, observer programs, and considering further developments to ICCAT's electronic bluefin tuna catch documentation program.

The next ICCAT annual meeting will be in Malta during November 2015.