

RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ATLANTIC OCEAN TROPICAL TUNA TAGGING PROGRAMME (AOTTP)

RECALLING that the ICCAT recommended in 2010 the establishment of a large scale research programme, based on tagging methodology to allow estimating the key-parameters of tropical tuna population dynamics, to reduce stock assessment uncertainties and to gauge the effectiveness of different fisheries management options and conservation and management measures;

ACKNOWLEDGING that in 2014 ICCAT launched a study on the feasibility of such a large scale tagging programme, including an estimation of the budget necessary to its implementation;

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING that the results of this feasibility study were discussed during the skipjack stock assessment meeting held in Dakar in June 2014 and that it was concluded that an AOTTP would greatly help in resolving uncertainty about the stock dynamics of tropical species and provide important inputs into stock assessment that are currently lacking;

CONSIDERING that the SCRS also reviewed the results of the feasibility study and stated in its 2014 report that current uncertainties in stock structure, natural mortality, and growth have important implications for the stock assessment of yellowfin tuna and that the proposed AOTTP, if fully funded, should help resolve these uncertainties;

RECOGNISING that in order to improve stock assessments, to reduce the uncertainty in the estimation of the status of the stocks of tropical tuna in the Atlantic Ocean, and to gauge the effectiveness of different fisheries management options, key parameters on the population dynamic and the biology of these stocks need to be further investigated;

FURTHER CONSIDERING that, according to the 2014 SCRS report, for skipjack tuna it is difficult to estimate the MSY in conditions of recent growth of catches without having reliable indicators on the response of the stock to these increases. These indicators, i.e. CPUE series, fishing mortality estimates from tagging programmes or other indicators on the exploitation of this species, should be improved and the implementation of the AOTTP will largely contribute to this;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the implementation of similar large-scale programmes in the Indian Ocean during the years 2005-2009 and in the Pacific ocean during the years 1977-1981, 1989-1992 and 2006-2014 consistently contributed to improving the knowledge of the tropical tuna stocks and thus provided sound information in support of the decision making process;

ACKNOWLEDGING that on the basis of the ICCAT feasibility study the total cost, without contingencies, associated to the AOTTP implementation is estimated at €16.87 million for a duration of 5 years and that therefore, the ICCAT regular budget cannot be used for the implementation of the AOTTP;

NOTING that the contribution proposed by the EU can cover only up to 80% of the implementation costs in line with their domestic rules and that therefore extra-budgetary and/or in-kind contributions are necessary from ICCAT CPCs and others;

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

1. An Atlantic Ocean Tropical Tuna Tagging Program (AOTTP) will be implemented for the main tropical tuna stocks (yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna and skipjack tuna) as well as for neritic small tunas of high importance for coastal populations.
2. All CPCs and other potential donors are encouraged to provide the necessary funding or other support, in particular in form of in kind contributions, in order to enable the conduct of this critical scientific endeavour.

3. In addition, the Executive Secretary of ICCAT will explore the possibility to use alternative sources of funding for the implementation of this program, such as the GEF Project to Enhance Tuna Management and Marine Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ).