

RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT AMENDING REC. 17-06 FOR AN INTERIM CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR WESTERN ATLANTIC BLUEFIN TUNA

RECALLING the Recommendation by ICCAT for an Interim Conservation and Management Plan for Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (Rec. 17-06), which will expire at the end of 2020;

NOTING the unprecedented situation in 2020 that has resulted in the cancellation of the ICCAT annual meeting and the need to make decisions by correspondence through which it is difficult to have substantive discussion to establish total allowable catch levels and other conservation and management measures;

UNDERSCORING the need to ensure there is no lapse in conservation and management measures for western Atlantic bluefin tuna in 2021 while acknowledging the significant challenges associated with complex decision making by correspondence;

NOTING that the Commission will be able to more fully consider the management of western Atlantic bluefin tuna when it meets in person at its 2021 annual meeting;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the results of the 2020 western Atlantic bluefin tuna stock assessment update, which indicates a concern for maintaining the current TAC level for the next three years and includes, particularly, the management scenarios that the SCRS provided for the three-year projection period that address overfishing with varying probabilities by 2023 at the latest;

WELCOMING the 2021 SCRS Bluefin Tuna Workplan and the establishment of a subgroup to conduct a thorough evaluation of indices of abundance and their use in the stock assessment models, which is essential both to advance Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) and for stock assessment purposes;

CONCERNED that the strict update format of the 2020 assessment did not provide the SCRS with enough flexibility to address potential issues with the data and their treatment;

SEEKING, therefore, to ensure that the more robust scientific information on the status of the stock becomes available to the Commission for consideration at its Annual Meeting in 2021;

RECOGNIZING the importance of continuing to advance the bluefin tuna MSE as a matter of priority and stressing that an assessment for the western Atlantic bluefin tuna stock in 2021 must be conducted in a manner that will not negatively affect the current bluefin tuna MSE workplan;

STRESSING also that the Commission shall follow the SCRS advice while, to the extent practicable, giving due consideration to minimizing economic difficulties of the fishermen and other factors;

ACKNOWLEDGING a new assessment will be conducted in 2021 for western Atlantic bluefin tuna and committed to continuing to ensure that overfishing is addressed in the future with at least a 50% probability;

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

1. The provisions in the Recommendation by ICCAT for an Interim Conservation and Management Plan for Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (Rec. 17-06) shall be extended through 2021 with the following amendments:

(1) Paragraph 1 shall be replaced with:

“1. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities (CPCs) whose vessels have been actively fishing for bluefin tuna in the western Atlantic shall implement the following interim conservation and management plan for the 2021 period.”

(2) Paragraph 3 shall be replaced with:

“3. The annual total allowable catch (TAC), inclusive of dead discards, of 2,350 t is established for 2021.”

(3) Paragraph 4 shall be replaced with:

“4. The annual TAC in Paragraph 3 shall be reviewed and amended, as appropriate, in 2021 by the Commission on the advice of the SCRS with a view to addressing overfishing in 2023 at the latest with at least a 50% probability. In this regard, the Commission at its 2021 meeting shall endorse the TACs for 2022 and 2023 at 1,685 t and 1,632 t, respectively unless the Commission decides otherwise based on new SCRS advice. In support of this work, CPCs shall make special efforts, *inter alia*, to update abundance indices and all catch and size composition data up to and including 2020 and provide them to the SCRS.”

(4) Paragraph 6 shall be replaced with:

“6. The allocation of the annual TAC, inclusive of dead discards, will be indicated as follows:

(a) The annual TAC shall include the following allocations:

<i>CPC</i>	<i>Allocation</i>
USA (by-catch related to longline fisheries in vicinity of management area boundary)	25 t
Canada (by-catch related to longline fisheries in vicinity of management area boundary)	15 t

b) After subtracting the amounts under paragraph 6(a), the remainder of the annual TAC will be allocated as follows:

CPC	<i>If the remainder of the annual TAC is:</i>			
	<2,413 t (A)	2,413 t (B)	>2,413-2,660 t (C)	>2,660 t (D)
United States	54.02%	1,303 t	1,303 t	49.00%
Canada	22.32%	539 t	539 t	20.24%
Japan	17.64%	426 t	426 t + all increase between 2,413 t and 2,660 t	24.74%
United Kingdom (in respect of Bermuda)	0.23%	5.5 t	5.5 t	0.23%
France (in respect of St. Pierre & Miquelon)	0.23%	5.5 t	5.5 t	0.23%
Mexico	5.56%	134 t	134 t	5.56%

- (c) Consistent with paragraphs 1, 3, and 6(b), the TAC for 2021 results in the following CPC-specific quota allocations (not including by-catch allowances listed in 6(a)):

TAC for 2021: 2,350 t

United States	1,247.86 t
Canada	515.59 t
Japan	407.48 t
United Kingdom (in respect of Bermuda)	5.31 t
France (in respect of St. Pierre & Miquelon)	5.31 t
Mexico	128.44 t

In no case shall the allocation to France (in respect of St. Pierre & Miquelon) and to the United Kingdom (in respect of Bermuda) be less than 4 t each in any single year unless the fishery is closed.

- (d) Depending on availability, Mexico can transfer up to 128.44 t of its adjusted quota in 2021 to Canada to support cooperative research as specified in paragraph 20.
- (e) Depending on availability, the United Kingdom (in respect of Bermuda) can transfer up to the amount of its adjusted quota in 2021 to the United States to support cooperative research as specified in paragraph 20.
- (f) Depending on availability, France (in respect of St. Pierre & Miquelon) can transfer up to the amount of its adjusted quota in 2021 to Canada to support cooperative research as specified in paragraph 20.
- (g) CPCs planning to engage in the cooperative research activities specified in paragraphs 6(d), 6(e), and 6(f) above shall: notify the Commission and the SCRS of the details of their research programs to be undertaken before they commence, and present the results of the research to the SCRS.”

- (5) Paragraph 16 shall be replaced with:

“16. The SCRS shall refine the MSE and continue testing the initial candidate management procedures. On this basis, in 2021, the Commission shall review these candidate management procedures and, if possible in 2021 and at the latest in 2022, select a management procedure for adoption and implementation, including pre-agreed management actions to be taken under various stock conditions.”

- (6) Paragraph 17 shall be replaced with:

“17. In 2021, the SCRS will conduct a stock assessment for the western Atlantic bluefin tuna stock to incorporate the most recent available data, including any new abundance indices adopted by the Bluefin Tuna Species Group and provide advice to the Commission on the appropriate management measures, approaches, and strategies, including, *inter alia*, regarding TAC levels for that stock for future years. Such assessment shall be conducted in a way that does not negatively affect the other work of the SCRS, particularly the ongoing MSE process for bluefin tuna. In addition, an external expert will be contracted in accordance with the standard procedures of ICCAT. The expert will review the assessment in a manner consistent with established SCRS practices, prepare a report on his or her findings and present their findings/results to the Bluefin Tuna Species Group. No stock assessment will be required for the western Atlantic bluefin tuna stock in 2022 unless the SCRS is unable to perform an assessment in 2021.”

(7) Paragraph 18 shall be replaced with:

“18. By 2022, the SCRS shall provide the Commission with advice on any potential impacts due to uncertainties (including regarding the spawner-recruit relationship) of implementing an $F_{0.1}$ strategy, and, for any identified risks, advise how they could be addressed in future management decisions.”

(8) Paragraph 20 shall be replaced with:

“20. CPCs that harvest Atlantic bluefin tuna should contribute to the research, including that being undertaken through ICCAT’s GBYP. CPCs should make or continue special efforts to enhance the collection and analysis of biological samples from Atlantic bluefin tuna fisheries, such as through sample contributions to the coordinated sampling plan recommended by the SCRS. The SCRS will report to the Commission in 2021 on these efforts. In addition, it is important to continue to explore sampling and/or other approaches for enhancing, and where needed developing, accurate abundance indices for juvenile bluefin tuna. CPCs should also make special efforts to ensure complete and timely submission of any collected data to the SCRS.”

2. In 2021 the Commission shall review and amend, as appropriate, the Recommendation 17-06 as amended by this recommendation.