

[02-09]

**RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT TO DEVELOP A PLAN
AIMED AT REDUCING THE CATCHES OF JUVENILE
BLUEFIN TUNA IN THE MEDITERRANEAN**

CONSIDERING that Commission has, since 1975, established various general recommendations aimed at protecting juvenile bluefin tuna weighing less than 6.4 kg, 3.2 kg, and 1.8 kg, setting different tolerance levels according to the minimum size-weight established, as well as defining closed seasons in the Mediterranean (including the Adriatic).

CONFIRMING that the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) in its recent assessment in 2002 estimated that in the year 2000, 36% and 40% of the bluefin tuna caught in the overall Mediterranean were less than 3.2 kg or 6.4 kg, respectively, and that it is possible that catches of age 0 fish are being underestimated.

CONSIDERING that the SCRS identifies the lack of size data on many fisheries as one of the sources of uncertainty in its assessments, for which a significant portion had to be estimated by SCRS itself through substitutions among fleets and, therefore, the Committee does not have confidence in the analytical assessments based on such data.

CONFIRMING that since January 2002 some countries in the Mediterranean area have prohibited the use of drift nets to catch bluefin tuna, among other species,

CONFIRMING that the SCRS recommends doing everything possible to assure compliance with the current minimum size/weight limit of 6.4 kg in order to contribute to the increase in the spawning biomass and to the stock yields, and also reiterates the need to adopt effective measures to avoid the catch of age 0 and 1 fish.

CONSIDERING the great variety of gears and fleets that operate in the Mediterranean, industrial as well as artisanal, which constitutes a highly complex framework for scientific monitoring and compliance with the measures in force to protect juveniles in general.

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

1. Contracting Parties, Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities shall assure the maintenance or development of adequate schemes to provide scientific information in the formats requested by ICCAT and in smallest time-area possible on the size distributions of the catches taken by the various fishing gears, including fish destined for farming.
2. Contracting Parties, Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities shall develop in 2003-2004, within the scope of their respective jurisdictions, specific plans directed at reducing their catches of juvenile bluefin tuna in their Mediterranean fisheries with the objective of reaching at least the tolerance levels indicated in the current ICCAT recommendations for the protection of juvenile bluefin tuna which according to SCRS recommendations, would lead to a reduction of at least 60% in the number of fish caught below 6.4 kg in the Mediterranean. Such plans and the results obtained shall be presented to the Commission in 2005.
3. Contracting Parties, Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities shall develop in 2003-2004 specific scientific programs to identify the various fisheries that fish bluefin tuna as well as the size distribution of their respective catches, including historical catches in their estimates, if these are available. The results of these scientific projects shall be presented to the SCRS in 2005.
4. Based on this scientific information and other information available, the SCRS shall inform the Commission in 2005 on the availability and improvements in the size data for scientific purposes, for the various Mediterranean gears-fleets. Besides, the SCRS shall evaluate the overall data on the catch levels of juveniles by fishing gear(s), with time-area stratification, if necessary, for more adequate detailed information. This information could be incorporated in the new East Atlantic bluefin tuna assessment aimed at developing possible recovery scenarios.
5. Based on this information from the SCRS, the Commission shall, in 2005, consider additional measures or alternatives for the protection of juvenile bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean.