

[02-11]

**RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP
TO DEVELOP INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED ATLANTIC
BLUEFIN TUNA MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

RECALLING that the current boundary between eastern and western management areas was established for the purpose of managing spatially distinct fishing grounds and spawning areas;

RECOGNIZING that one of the elements of uncertainty surrounding the assessment relates to the boundary between the eastern and western management areas for bluefin tuna that may impact negatively on the effectiveness of management actions throughout the Atlantic and Mediterranean;

BEARING IN MIND that evidence on mixing of the bluefin tuna of uncertain origin (eastern or western) is a key source of uncertainty to enable more precise assessments to be made, and it could reduce, to some unknown extent, the effectiveness of ICCAT management measures;

NOTING that the 2001 ICCAT Workshop on Bluefin Tuna Mixing (SCRS/01/020) concluded that “it is unlikely that any management unit boundary between the Western and Eastern Atlantic will be effective in separating bluefin tuna of Gulf of Mexico (Western Atlantic) and Mediterranean Sea (Eastern Atlantic) origin, into non-overlapping populations”, and that the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) in 2002 stated that “the Committee lacked a quantitative basis for recommending a change in the management area boundary or the implications of the change;”

FURTHER RECALLING that the SCRS Response in 2002 to the Commission on Bluefin Tuna Mixing recommended research to better quantify the origin of fish, mixing and its implications in the central Atlantic;

RECOGNIZING, however, that much of the relevant research is being conducted in diverse locations, and there is a need to synthesize all available information within a unified framework.

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

1. A Working Group, comprised of scientists and managers, shall be established to evaluate all available biological information relevant to the issue of stock structure and mixing, and to develop operational options for implementing alternative approaches for managing mixed populations of Atlantic bluefin tuna including but not limited to those developed by SCRS;
2. In developing options, the Working Group shall consider scientific information on the biology of bluefin tuna, historical data on fisheries, and the feasibility of alternative scenarios;
3. The Working Group shall meet no later than November 2003 and as necessary thereafter, and report to the Commission at its meeting in 2004.