



London, 27 August 2011

EAA Resolution on Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (BFT)

- EAA urges management improvements and less adverse impacts on the recreational angling sector

The European Anglers Alliance, representing recreational angling organisations in 13 European states and over 3 million anglers, held its 17th General Assembly in London 27 August 2011, and discussed the management of Atlantic bluefin tuna.

Introduction:

In recent years ICCAT has tightened up on a variety of BFT management measures including improvement of data collection, increased minimum landing sizes, decrease in TACs and more. The ICCAT 'Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities' (CPCs) have made improvements with regard to control and enforcement of their tuna fisheries. This gives some hope that the tuna stocks may rebuild.

However, some measures have already, or soon will, adversely impact recreational angling and its dependent businesses including the tourism sector. EAA believes that these adverse effects were unintended by the decision makers but slipped through due to a variety of reasons e.g. lack of data on commercial and recreational tuna fisheries and the absence of sufficient information on the socio-economic importance of recreational fishing, angling in particular.

EAA would like to stress that people engaging in recreational fishing are characterized by seeking different benefits, aspiration and expectations compared to commercial or subsistence fishers, which ultimately result in different goals and objectives of recreational and commercial fisheries.

Therefore, different guidelines and strategies for sustainable management exist in recreational and commercial fisheries. This should also be the case for BFT fisheries management.

The fishing season for recreational fishing should be set independently of the seasons set for the various kinds of commercial fisheries. The recreational fishing season should be as long as possible and with as little risk as possible that closures are imposed before the end of the season.

The construct of the present TAC and quota system for tuna fishing seems a big obstacle on the way to achieve fair and equitable treatment of the recreational fishing sector in Europe.

Only recently (Nov 2008) ICCAT agreed in its recovery plan that part of the tuna quotas should be allocated the recreational sectorⁱ. Unfortunately, the ICCAT didn't make any attempt to quantify this part but left it to the CPCs to decide how little this should be. France and Spain chose to make it ca. 1 percent, Italy a bit more but overall far too little to meet the recreational need.

In comparison US has allocated about 20 percent of their bluefin tuna quota to anglingⁱⁱ.

When the tuna quota system was installed for more than a decade ago Europe didn't take due consideration to the recreational fishing sector's need for tuna. The quotas were given commercial fishing enterprises and individual fishermen for free, which today is traded within the sector as highly valuable commodities. Obviously newcomers, like the European recreational fishers, are not very welcomed by the present quota holders if they should be entitled to more than miniscule of the TAC.

The pending amending of the multiannual recovery plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (COM(2011) 330 final - 8.6.2011)¹ is an open opportunity to include some or all of the EAA proposals in the EU Regulation.

¹ [www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/com/com_com\(2011\)0330/_com_com\(2011\)0330_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/com/com_com(2011)0330/_com_com(2011)0330_en.pdf)

The EAA General Assembly adopted seven recommendations to improve the ICCAT and EU BFT fisheries management with regard to recreational fishing:

1 - EAA urges, with emphasize on the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean seas:

- **Further improvement of data collected** on commercial as well as recreational BFT fisheries.
- **Changes to be made with regard to the categories set for ICCAT data collection** concerning recreational BFT fisheries.

Recreational fishing data from before 2006 are stored in the ICCAT database under two categories: “*sport (SP) and recreational (RR - Rod and Line) fisheries*”. In 2006 ICCAT adopted two definitions for recreational fishingⁱⁱⁱ, which do not fully comply with the data collected and stored already in the database. Above all old and new data seem not fit for present management needs as not all relevant recreational fisheries segments are identified or kept separate in a non-ambiguous way. **Therefore:**

2 - EAA suggest these categories to be established for ICCAT data collection purposes:

- **Recreational Angling** (rod and line and hand lines); eventually a sub-category “competition fishing”
- **Charter boating** (business: boat taking anglers onboard against payment)
- **Recreational Spear Fishing**; eventually a sub-category “competition spear fishing”
- **Other recreational fishing**; this category may be needed for the ICCAT database to be complete. However, for EU waters in the Mediterranean Sea there may be no such data to collect. Most of, or all, other recreational fishing - apart from recreational angling, sports/competition fishing and spear-guns - were banned by Council Regulation (EC) 1967/2006 of 21 December 2006^{iv}.

3 - EAA requests that Atlantic bluefin tuna released by recreational anglers shall not be included the catch data and not be counted against the quota.

ICCAT members shall record catch data from recreational fishing and sport fishing according to ICCAT Recommendation of 18 December 2008, paragraphs 34 and 38^v. However, there is no mention about data on tuna released alive by recreational anglers. If released fish are not removed from the catch data the estimated recreational fishing impact on the tuna stock will be too high and the recreational fishing quota allocated the recreational sector will eventually be used up too fast. In this regard the early Italian closure of recreational BFT this year may serve as an example^{vi}.

- **Tuna released alive should be recorded aside of** - not as part of - the catch data and not to be counted against the quota. Alternatively, a scientific based average mortality rate for released tuna could be included the catch data.

4 - EAA requests that socio-economic studies on recreational fishing for tuna is carried out as soon as possible and repeated e.g. every three years.

Often the recreational angling sector is treated as inferior to other fish exploiting interests or even a threat to them. This is a gross neglect of the huge economic contribution and the many jobs created and sustained by the recreational angling sector. Solid and repeated socio-economic studies may help to change this mistreat of a sector, which delivers more benefits and income per fish than any other sector. The decision makers need this information to be able to make informed decisions about sustainable fisheries management. EU and its Member States are already obliged “where relevant” to carry out pilot surveys “to estimate the importance of recreational fisheries” for certain species in certain areas. For the Mediterranean Sea is mentioned surveys may be carried out for eels and bluefin tuna^{vii}.

EAA finds it “highly relevant” to carry out as soon as possible a survey (socio-economics) of the importance of recreational BFT fishing.

5 - EAA suggests ICCAT to reconsider the exemption for sales of fish “for charitable purposes”

ICCAT Recommendation of 2008, paragraphs 33 and 37 should be revised.

EAA suggests:

- a) – to make “no kill” obligatory for fishing competitions
- b° - to delete the sales exception made for charitable purposes or, alternatively, alter to allow fish – not money – for charitable purposes (e.g. donate the fish to canteens for old people, schools etc). On this point the EU legislation seems inconsistent as the Control Regulation of 2009 Art 55(2)^{viii} bans all sales of fish from recreational fisheries without repeating the exemption possibility given in the Mediterranean Regulation of 2006^{ix}. Deleting the sales exemption in the ICCAT Recommendation would do away with the inconsistency in the EU legislation;

6 - EAA requests that recreational angling for tuna is managed in its own right independent of other tuna exploiting interests. Fish stocks are a public resource – and should remain so.

EAA agrees with EU Commissioner Damanaki that “fish stocks are a public resource”^x and also that “ITQs would not be property, but user right, because the resource remains a public good”^{xi}. However, the Commission needs to make a proposal how to secure the public’s access to the bluefin tuna resource independently of ITQs allocated to commercial exploiters. In particular to secure that recreational angling for tuna is not closed for reasons that other sectors have used up their quotas or wish additional quota. EAA suggests that the EU Member States are obliged to hold back (not distribute) some of their quota till mid or the end of the fishing season(s). This to secure that a few individuals fishing illegally don’t cause the fishing season to end before scheduled. Eventual surplus quota could be rolled-over to be included the quotas for the coming year.

7 - EAA requests that the recreational angling sector is allocated a fair share of the tuna quotas.

The BFT quotas allocated recreational fishing by European countries overall are too small to be fair. E.g. Spain and France only have allocated ca. 1 % to recreational fishing. Italy allocated a bit more but closed all recreational fishing – with a very short notice - 9 August, two months before the recreational tuna fishing season ends (14 Oct). The quota was used up it was said. For recreational fishers and the dependent businesses it is of paramount importance they can safely plan from one year to another without fear of BFT fishing closures before the announced fishing season ends.

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End notes // references:

ⁱ www.iccat.es/Documents/Recs/RECS_ADOPTED_2010_ENG.pdf - page 9: - ICCAT 10-04 BFT – p. 11:

“12. Each CPC shall also allocate a specific quota for the purpose of recreational and sport fisheries as defined in paragraph 2.m) and n).”

EU: The ICCAT recommendation was implemented by EU COUNCIL REGULATION (EU) No 57/2011, Art 18.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:024:0001:0125:EN:PDF>

ⁱⁱ www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/Tuna/2011/2011_BFT_Quota_Rule_Final_EA.pdf - page 88.

ⁱⁱⁱ www.iccat.es/Documents/Recs/ACT_COMP_2010_ENG.pdf – page 58:

m) "**Sport fishery**" means a non-commercial fishery whose members adhere to a national sport organization or are issued with a national sport license.

n) "**Recreational fishery**" means a non-commercial fishery whose members do not adhere to a national sport organization or are not issued with a national sport license.

^{iv} <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:409:0011:0085:EN:PDF>

Council Regulation (EC) 1967/2006 of 21 December 2006: Article 17 - Leisure fisheries:

1. The use of towed nets, surrounding nets, purse seines, boat dredges, mechanised dredges, gillnets, trammel nets and combined bottom-set nets shall be prohibited for leisure fisheries. The use of longlines for highly migratory species shall also be prohibited for leisure fisheries.

^v www.iccat.es/Documents/Recs/ACT_COMP_2010_ENG.pdf

ICCAT Recommendation of 18 December 2008, paragraphs 34 and 38 (pdf file's page 61).

^{vi} The ICCAT closed season for recreational fishing:

www.iccat.es/Documents/Recs/RECS_ADOPTED_2010_ENG.pdf - ICCAT 10-04 BFT - page 13:

“25. Bluefin tuna recreational and sport fishing shall be prohibited in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean from 15 October to 15 June.”

Nevertheless, Italy closed its recreational tuna fishing this year 9 August referring to exhaustion of the recreational quota.

^{vii} <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:060:0001:0012:EN:PDF> – Article 1 (a) the collection and management, in the framework of multiannual programmes, of biological, technical, environmental and socio-economic data concerning the fisheries sector; Article 2 (a) ‘fisheries sector’ means activities related to commercial fisheries, recreational fisheries, aquaculture and industries processing fisheries products; (c) ‘recreational fisheries’ means non-commercial fishing activities exploiting living aquatic resources for recreation or sport;

https://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=688f2153-f4f4-4825-8bb7-ac990ba279bd&groupId=10213 – page 7:

(a) For the recreational fisheries targeting the species listed in Appendix IV (1 to 5), Member States shall evaluate the quarterly weight of the catches.

(b) Where relevant, pilot surveys as referred to in Chapter II B (1) shall be carried out to estimate the importance of the recreational fisheries mentioned in point 3(3)(a).

^{viii} <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:343:0001:0050:EN:PDF>

Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009, Art 55(2): ‘The marketing of catches from recreational fisheries shall be prohibited.’

^{ix} <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:409:0011:0085:EN:PDF>

Council Regulation (EC) 1967/2006 of 21 December 2006, Art 17(3): “..by way of exception, the marketing of species caught in sportive competitions may be authorised provided that the profits from their sale are used for charitable purposes.”

^x www.fishsec.org/2011/07/13/new-cfp-sustainable-efficient-and-coherent-says-damanaki/

^{xi} Reference: SPEECH/ 11/19 17 - MARCH 2011

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/11/191&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&%20quiLanguage=en>