

Brussels, 6 October 2014

EAA Position on Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (BFT) management¹

EAA has adopted these recommendations to improve the ICCAT and EU BFT fisheries management with regard to recreational fishing:

1 - Data collection

EAA urges, with emphasis on the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean seas:

a - Further improvement of data collected on commercial as well as recreational BFT fisheries.

b - Changes to be made with regard to the categories set for ICCAT data collection concerning recreational BFT fisheries.

Recreational fishing data are stored in the ICCAT database under two categories: “*sport (SP) and recreational (RR - Rod and Line) fisheries*”. Since 2006 ICCAT adopted two definitions for recreational fishing², 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:**

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 2006.³

2 – Socio-economic value of recreational fishing for Bluefin Tuna

EAA requests that socio-economic studies on recreational fishing for tuna be 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 mistreatment of a sector, which delivers more benefits and income per fish than any other. 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 tuna⁴.

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

3 – Tagging & release practices

EAA suggest CPCs to encourage tagging & release practices.

ICCAT REC 13-09 enunciates for Western Atlantic BFT management. CPCs should encourage commercial and recreational fishermen to tag and release all fish < 30 kg or, alternatively, fork length <115 cm and report on steps taken in this regard in their Annual Report in Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean as well⁵

Many European anglers are seriously involved with conservation and recovery of this species, working hard side by side with scientific institutions. Anglers take part e.g. in the ICCAT/GBYP project⁶ as volunteers, helping scientists with data collection.

4 – Sales exemption to be revised

EAA suggests ICCAT and EU to reconsider the exemption for sales of fish “for charitable purposes” ICCAT Recommendation of 2013⁷, paragraphs 35 and 39, and Council Regulation (EC) 302/2009⁸ Art. 12 should be revised. **EAA suggests:**

- 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..

5 – Recreational catch limits

EAA suggests ICCAT to introduce a seasonal bag limit for any authorized recreational boat.

ICCAT Recommendation 13-07⁹, paragraph 34, should be revised. **EAA suggests that “CPCs shall take the necessary measures to”:**

- a) – Make catch and release obligatory in fishing competitions targeting tuna.
- b) – prohibit the catch and retention on board, transshipment or landing of more than one Bluefin tuna per recreational boat per day.
- c) - Introduce a seasonal landing limit for each authorized recreational vessel. This limit, fixed at Member State level, should take into account both the number of recreational vessels authorized and the recreational fishing quota, in order to distribute more fairly to the recreational fishing quota among the authorized recreational vessels.
- d) – allow Catch and Release BFT fishing practice all year round ¹⁰

6 – Control and enforcement

EAA welcomes recent years’ increased control and enforcement concerning the tuna fisheries. This, together with the implementation of rebuilding plans has brought good results in BFT tuna stock recovery, as highlighted in ICCAT Report 2012–2013 – but more could and should be done. ¹¹

7 – Recreational angling should be managed in its own right

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” ¹² and also that “ITQs would not be property, but user right, because the resource remains a public good” ¹³. 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 reason that the commercial sector has used up its quota, or its wish for additional quota. EAA suggests that the EU Member States should find a way how to avoid, that when a few commercial fishermen overfish their quota or a few individuals fish illegally, that these circumstances do not cause early closure of the recreational fishing season. We suggest, for example:

- a) The recreational fishing season open all year or till the recreational quota is used up ¹⁴.
- b) and/or to increase the observer coverage percentage on active longline catching vessels ¹⁵
- c) and/or that at national level longline fisheries are obliged to declare catches at least bi-weekly ¹⁶

8 - EAA requests recreational angling sector is allocated a fair share of the tuna quotas

The BFT quotas allocated to recreational fishing by European countries overall are too little to be fair to cover the basic need of the recreational angling and recreational angling tourism sectors. As a consequence early closures can occur. E.g. Italy closed all recreational fishing – with a very short notice this year – 23 July, more than two months before the recreational tuna fishing season ends (14 Oct). The quota was used up it was said. For recreational anglers and the dependent businesses, including tourism, it is of paramount importance they can plan safely from one year to another without having to fear a closure before the announced fishing season ends.

- ENDS -

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(Notes and references on the next two pages)

Notes and references:

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 is giving some results on tuna stocks rebuilding¹⁷.

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 to achieve fair and equitable treatment of the recreational fishing sector in Europe, as its fishing seasons starts - at least in the Mediterranean waters – after the longlines fishing vessels' season and the purse seiners' season¹⁸. This may lead to (as it did in Italy 2012-2013) that the recreational quota is reduced simply to balance the overfishing by longliners, which furthermore has and could again result in an early unfair closure of recreational angling.¹⁹

When the tuna quota system was put in place 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 to commercial fishing enterprises and individual fishermen for free, and are today traded between fishers as a highly valuable commodity. 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. For 2014 Spain, France and Italy have allocated ca. 1% of their quota to Recreational Fisheries, while in the USA the recreational quota for 2014 is 19.2%²⁰

Endnotes:

¹ This is an update of our BFT resolution of 2011:
www.eaa-europe.eu/fileadmin/templates/uploads/Pos_Res/Resolution/2011/BFT_position_27_Aug_2011_EAA_GA_final.pdf

² o) "Sport fishery" means a non-commercial fishery whose members adhere to a national sport organization or are issued with a national sport license.
p) "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

³ www.iccat.int/Documents/Recs/compendiopdf-e/2013-07-e.pdf - Page 2

⁴ <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 3. For the recreational fisheries:
(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).

⁵ www.iccat.int/Documents/Recs/compendiopdf-e/2013-09-e.pdf - Page 4:
"10. CPCs will encourage their commercial and recreational fishermen to tag and release all fish less than 30 kg or, in the alternative, having a fork length less than 115 cm and report on steps taken in this regard in their Annual Report."

⁶ www.iccat.int/Documents/BienRep/REP_EN_12-13_II_2.pdf - Page. 89 (95 of PDF):

"The Atlantic-wide Research Program for Bluefin Tuna (GBYP) research plan outlined the research necessary for improving the scientific advice that the Committee provides to the Commission. This plan was presented to and approved by the Commission and the GBYP was started in 2010. The Committee continues to strongly and unanimously support the GBYP, particularly with respect to obtain fisheries-independent indices of stock size, and welcomes the Commission's continued commitment to the Program. In the absence of such a significant and sustained effort, it remains highly unlikely that the Committee will improve its scientific diagnosis and management advice in the foreseeable future."

- Page 90 (96 of PDF):

"An important electronic and conventional tagging activity on both juveniles and adults fish has been performed in the East Atlantic and Mediterranean by GBYP, national programmes and NGOs. These ongoing efforts have started to provide significant insight into bluefin tuna stock structure, mixing and migrations and would possibly help in estimating fishing mortality rates."

⁷ www.iccat.int/Documents/Recs/compendiopdf-e/2013-07-e.pdf - Paragraphs 35-39

⁸ <http://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/eur86583.pdf> - Art. 12(3) " The marketing of bluefin tuna caught in recreational fishing shall be prohibited except for charitable purposes"

⁹ www.iccat.int/Documents/Recs/compendiopdf-e/2013-07-e.pdf -The paragraph 34 in force today reads: " CPCs shall take the necessary measures to prohibit the catch and retention on board, transshipment or landing of more than one bluefin tuna per vessel per day"

¹⁰ Med AC Recreational Fishery 2013 joint position on BFT:

www.racmed.eu/images/stories/avis/2013/297_Annex_I_Recr_fisheries_BFT_position.pdf

"Catch and release should be allowed all year round. Landings should be allowed within the period given by ICCAT (currently from June 15 to October 14)."

¹¹ ICCAT REPORT 2012-2013 – Page 93 (99 of PDF)

www.iccat.int/Documents/BienRep/REP_EN_12-13_II_2.pdf

"Although care is needed when considering estimates of catch using capacity measures, the Group's interpretation is that a substantial decrease in the catch occurred in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea through implementation of the rebuilding plan and through monitoring and enforcement controls."

¹² www.fishsec.org/2011/07/13/new-cfp-sustainable-efficient-and-coherent-says-damanaki/

¹³ Reference: SPEECH/ 11/191 17 MARCH 2011 http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-11-191_en.htm

¹⁴ www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/species/tunas/documents/tunas_regs_brochure_-_2014_final_bft_quota_specifications.pdf

USA HMS Angling Category Regulation

¹⁵ <http://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/eur86583.pdf> Art. 30(1)(c)

¹⁶ In Italy, for example, longlines catch declaration is weekly - Decreto Direttore Generale n. 10840 del 13 maggio 2014

www.politicheagricole.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/7629

"Analogamente, i comandanti delle unità da pesca, autorizzate alla cattura del tonno rosso con il sistema palangaro (unità di L.f.t. ≤ 24 metri) devono trasmettere a questa Direzione Generale, via fax e/o e-mail, una comunicazione settimanale di cattura"

¹⁷ ICCAT REPORT 2012-2013 – Page 94 (100 of PDF)

www.iccat.int/Documents/BienRep/REP_EN_12-13_II_2.pdf

"The implementation of recent regulations through [Recs. 12-03, 10-04, 09-06, and previous recommendations] has clearly resulted in reductions in catch and fishing mortality rates. All CPUE indices showed increasing tendencies in most recent years."

¹⁸ www.iccat.int/Documents/Recs/compendiopdf-e/2013-07-e.pdf - Page 4: Open Fishing Season

¹⁹ Italy - Decreto Ministeriale 18 giugno 2013 www.pescaricreativa.org/docs/lexit/dm18giugno2013.pdf

²⁰ www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/species/tunas/documents/tunas_regs_brochure_-_2014_final_bft_quota_specifications.pdf

Page 1: 'OVERVIEW OF BFT DOMESTIC QUOTAS'. Total quota: 948.1 metric tons (mt). Angling: 182 mt.