



ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS
OF FISHING ENTERPRISES IN THE EU

ICCAT FAD Moratorium reduced in the Atlantic, tuna industry will now try to recover from economic impact

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After five years of implementation, the Atlantic Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) moratorium enforced by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), was reduced from 72 to 45 days during ICCAT's 24th special meeting, held in Cyprus from November 11 to 18. This decision was taken at the initiative of the European Union, Ivory Coast, and Central American countries.

ICCAT's Standing Committee for Research and Statistic (SCRS) could not demonstrate the moratorium's effectiveness in protecting the bigeye tuna stock and concluded that no moratorium is necessary to maintain the species' stock health, as the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and its distribution have proven sufficient. However, in the absence of an allocation for yellowfin tuna, the SCRS recommended maintaining a minimum 30-day closure, despite the fact that the recent yellowfin stock assessment indicates that the species is not overfished nor subject to overfishing.

The FAD moratorium has had serious socio-economic consequences, particularly for African canneries, with many, especially in Ivory Coast and Cabo Verde, forced to shut down. This has resulted in the loss of thousands of jobs in Africa, most of which were held by women who supported their families. The moratorium also led to the disappearance of half of the European purse seine fleet operating in ICCAT's regulated waters. Two of which, operating solely in the Atlantic with no alternatives, were unable to continue. These businesses, which faced unfair competition from Asian interests, were key suppliers of tuna to the European Union.

Anne-France Mattlet, Director of European Tuna Group, indicates: *"It is unfortunate that it took such severe socio-economic impact to prompt a reduction in a moratorium whose effectiveness remains unproven. While this decision comes too late for two European shipowners, who have already been forced to cease operations, we hope it will provide some relief to the remaining European tropical tuna purse seine fleet. We also see the European Union's stand for science-based but also socio-economically proportionate measures as a good sign for the upcoming mandate of Commissioner Costas Kadis."*

After long discussions until the last minute, bigeye tuna catch limits were also agreed among all CPCs.

The Commission has continued its commitment to establishing management objectives and strategies for the three main tropical tuna species, as well as implementing management measures and procedures for North Atlantic swordfish which will ensure the continued sustainable exploitation of the stocks. Additionally, initial operational management goals were set for southern Atlantic albacore.

Europêche welcomes the entry into force of ICCAT's recommendations on whale sharks and mobulid rays, marking an important step forward in shark conservation. However, despite strong support from European fleets, Europêche expresses deep disappointment over the opposition from China and Japan to recommendations aimed at ensuring the implementation of fins naturally attached policy.

Xavier Leduc, President of Europêche Tuna Group, also highlights the lack of improvement of control and compliance: *"To ensure EU fleets are not subject to unfair competition and sustainable fishing practices, it is essential that third countries operating in ICCAT's waters implement basic control, monitoring, and compliance measures. This includes a comprehensive list of operational vessels, increased observer coverage, and the establishment of a high sea's inspection and boarding scheme. While we understand that the opposition from some Asian countries prevents from adopting such ICCAT measures, it may be time for the European Union to take stronger action by refusing access to its market to products from fleets that do not adhere to these fundamental measures to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing."*

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