



EU tuna purse seine fleet representatives and scientists to continue collaboration to achieve enhanced tuna stock assessments

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The Europêche Tuna Group¹ organised on January 23rd in Montpellier its second meeting between industry and science stakeholders at European Level entitled: “*Towards robust stock evaluations for better management*”. The meeting gathered 23 experts in Montpellier, including a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) representative.

On a first panel, scientists from the French *Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD)*, the *Instituto español de oceanografía (IEO)* and the Spanish AZTI attended and explained their needs to produce better estimates for the stock assessment process, essentially pointing out the importance of data availability but also of clear, stable and consistent data recovery methodologies. Some new methods based on buoy², sonar³ or even genotype⁴ are promising to determine stocks abundance.

Fishing industry representatives have raised concerns about potential misinterpretations of scientific advice due to the inherent uncertainties of any stock assessment. They warned against significant negative consequences on purse seine fishing fleets as a result of uneven management actions within Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), that could also hamper stocks’ recovery. Both scientists and fisheries’ representatives emphasized the importance of using clear and unambiguous communication regarding stock assessment results in order to prevent any potential distortion of the information on stocks status. RFMOs and flag states also need to strengthen their compliance enforcement processes.

In a second panel, scientists explained to the sector the functioning and implications for fleets of multispecies Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for tropical tunas. This scientific process specifically examines the impact of fishing and management strategies on all the stocks of tropical tuna within each region, rather than focusing on a single species, hence recognising the multi-species nature of the fisheries and the interconnected nature of the stocks targeted, as well as additional ecosystem impacts, aiming to develop more holistic and effective management strategies.

Anne-France Mattlet, director of Europêche Tuna Group, underscores the value of such gatherings: “Through open dialogue and frank exchanges of perspectives, both scientists and purse-seine industry representatives have successfully achieved a deeper mutual understanding, marking the first step towards developing effective solutions.”

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¹ The Europêche Tuna Group is comprised of the main three tuna freezer purse-seine organisations in Europe, namely OPAGAC-AGAC, ANABAC and ORTHONGEL

² Buoy-derived Abundance Index

³ Sonar-Based abundance Index

⁴ Close-Kin Mark-Recapture

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