



ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS  
OF FISHING ENTERPRISES IN THE EU

## **ICCAT makes progress on sustainable fisheries management despite Asian opposition**

21 November 2023

**Europêche represented the European fishing fleet at the 28th ordinary meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), which ended on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> November in New Cairo, Egypt.**

ICCAT adopted a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for North Atlantic Albacore tuna of 47 251 tonnes, which represents an increase of 25%. This was possible thanks to the scientific data evidencing the good health of the stock and the management and conservation measures implemented over several years. Daniel Voces, managing director of Europêche, says: *“This is good news for the European fleet and the result of our fishers’ unwavering dedication in adhering to and implementing strict regulations”.*

ICCAT also adopted a TAC of 27 711 tons for the South Atlantic Blue Shark. However, for the North stock, ICCAT decided to cut the TAC by 23% (from 39,000 to 30,000 tons), despite the fact that the stock was not overfished and that overfishing is not occurring. Javier Garat, President of Europêche, fears that *“this decision will add unjustified burden to the EU fishing industry, which has made significantly more efforts than other fleets in reducing fishing effort while increasing reporting and monitoring at sea. As always, they will endure the consequences of strict management while other fleets will continue business as usual. We hope this changes now.”*

On shark finning, Japan opposed and vetoed the European Union’s proposal for a “recommendation concerning the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT”, which included the obligation to provide more data to scientists and to land fins naturally attached to carcasses. The European fishing fleets have been applying a ban on shark finning since 2003 and since 2013 the fins attached policy. Javier Garat declared *“While I note with satisfaction the growing number of co-sponsors on this conservation measure year on year, discussions have been on-going for 15 years now; it is time to approve the fins attached policy to guarantee the ban on shark finning.”*

For bigeye, while the stock evaluation allowed for an increase of the TAC up to 75 000 tons, corresponding to a 64% probability of remaining in the green quadrant of the Kobe matrix, the parties opted for a more cautious approach by adopting a roll-over at 62 000 tons until a new allocation is determined. Unfortunately, the ICCAT’s Commission has failed to adopt such a new scheme for the last two years.

Xavier Leduc, president of Europêche Tuna Group, says *“It is paramount to adopt a new allocation scheme ensuring both the possibility for developing countries to benefit from quota increases, and a certain stability for existing fleets, like the EU purse seine fleet which contributes to the local economies through fisheries agreements, use of port facilities and plants supply. While this would be perfectly possible with a potential increase of the TAC increased and the redistribution of unused fishing*

*opportunities, Japan is reluctant to redistribute its long-term unused catch quotas to developing states. We hope that the working group on allocation will facilitate progress on this matter. We also hope that next year, ICCAT's Commission will seize the opportunity to raise observer coverage on longliners, which are limited to 10% while purse seiners are 100% observed, and to ban at sea transshipments".*

*Anne-France Mattlet, director of Europêche Tuna Group, also precises: "It is important for ICCAT to keep improving its compliance process and to avoid rewarding with additional fishing opportunities contracting parties (CPCs) involved in recurrent over-catch and poor compliance records unless they show a strong commitment to revert the situation and provide proof of improvement".*

The high-sea boarding and inspection scheme was neither adopted, as several contracting parties were not satisfied with the proposal, including China.

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