



Another missed opportunity for ICCAT

23 November 2022

Europêche represented the European fishing fleet at the 23rd ordinary meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) which just ended on Monday 21 November in Val de Lobo, Portugal.

After major efforts and sacrifices made by European purse seiners to restore the bigeye tuna stock, this week's discussions unfortunately did not lead to the TAC increased allowed by the ICCAT Scientific Committee. Contracting parties decided to roll over the measures applied in 2022 and an intersessional period is already scheduled to discuss, in particular, the allocation of the TAC.

Anne-France Mattlet, Director of Europêche Tuna Group, declared: *"This is unfortunately a missed occasion to increase opportunities for developing countries, as proposed by the EU. European seiners, which account for less than 30% of bigeye tuna catches in the Atlantic, faced the refusal of some ICCAT contracting parties, particularly Asian countries, the United States and Canada to increase the TAC despite a scientific advice that did allow it. »*

Europêche welcomes the adoption of the first ICCAT long-term management procedure for a for Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna. This new procedure will provide better stability for European fishers who will benefit from an increase of TAC up to 40,570 tons annually until 2025.

With regard to shark management, Europêche notes with great disappointment that China and Japan opposed a veto to the recommendation on shark conservation in association with ICCAT managed fisheries, which included the obligation to provide more data to scientists and to land fins naturally attached to the body. European vessels have been applying such a policy since 2013.

Europêche has brought before the ICCAT the theft by Greenpeace of 30km of longlines and the associated catches, including, according to the organization, seven swordfish and a blue shark, a commercial species sustainably managed by ICCAT, as shown by the last stock assessment of 2015. Javier Garat, President of Europêche, said: *"Longline fishing is subject to fishing authorisation and fishing quotas, and retention on board of catches must be subject to multiple declarations. We hope that the Greenpeace vessel has indeed been controlled by fishery inspectors in the first European harbour it reached. »*

ICCAT parties agreed on management measures for South Atlantic shortfin mako starting in 2023 to support the sustainability of the fishery. The TAC was set to a maximum of 1,295 t until new scientific advice is provided in 2024. Garat commented: *"We welcome ICCAT's decisive action to strictly regulate this species that shows that there is no need to cut corners through CITES. In this regard, we call on the EU and national governments to revise their decision not to allow the commercialization of South Atlantic shortfin mako."*

Europêche agrees with the management measures agreed for both North and South Atlantic swordfish stocks setting TACs in accordance with scientific advice.

Finally, Europêche welcomes the ICCAT initiative, which makes it possible to launch an initial assessment and integration of the challenges of climate change and its consequences on fisheries in the ICCAT area.

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