



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 11 October 2012**

**14549/1/12  
REV 1**

**PECHE 391**

**REVISED REPORT**

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from: General Secretariat  
to: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)/ Council  
Subject: ICCAT annual meeting (Agadir, 12 - 20 November 2012)  
- *exchange of views*

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1. *The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)* is responsible for the conservation of tuna and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean and adjacent seas. The management competences of ICCAT thus cover, among others, such species as bluefin tuna, swordfish and tropical tunas. In addition ICCAT can adopt by-catch and preventive measures for sharks, sea turtles and sea birds. The organization was established in 1969 and has 42 Contracting Parties, including the EU, UK and FR (the latter two on behalf of their overseas territories).
2. In autumn 2008 and 2010, the Council adopted Decisions for the establishment of the Community position in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas<sup>1</sup> which are valid until the ICCAT meeting in 2013. The 2010 amendment of the mandate concerned the position as regards Eastern bluefin tuna.

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<sup>1</sup> Docs. 14863/08 PECHE 278 RESTREINT UE, 16466/1/10 REV 1 PECHE 292 RESTREINT UE.

3. In 2006 ICCAT adopted a 15-year recovery plan for Eastern bluefin tuna. This plan was subsequently modified in 2008, 2009 and 2010. Eastern bluefin tuna is a subject with important financial implications for the European tuna fishing and farming industry. It is also attracting a lot of attention from the general public in many countries around the world.
4. During the 2011 annual meeting, ICCAT focussed the work related to the Eastern bluefin tuna plan on compliance and catch documentation. The EU had made significant efforts to ensure compliance with the Bluefin tuna recovery plan, both by itself and third countries. The same annual meeting adopted new or strengthened management measures for Mediterranean swordfish, bigeye and yellowfin tunas, silky sharks and for marlins. Progress on important files such as Mediterranean swordfish and tropical tunas had been rendered difficult by the almost exclusive focus on Eastern bluefin tuna during the previous annual meetings of ICCAT.
5. The ICCAT's scientific committee (Standing Committee on Research and Statistics, "SCRS") provided in mid-October 2012 a stock assessment update of the Eastern bluefin tuna and advised on total allowable catch (TAC) and other management measures, as well as on possible sanctuaries for spawning grounds. According to this report, the stock rebuilding objectives could be achieved with catches close to current TAC (12,900 t) or slightly higher. The indicators show an increase of the stock size, although the magnitude and speed of the increase are uncertain. No conclusive advice was given on spawning grounds.
6. During the annual meeting in Agadir, 12-19 November 2012, the ICCAT Commission is expected to review the Bluefin tuna recovery plan. This would comprise establishing new TACs and, where appropriate, other management measures. Although ICCAT is responsible for *many* other species than Eastern bluefin tuna, the eagerly awaited SCRS stock assessment will almost inevitably place the emphasis of this year's meeting on the conservation of Eastern bluefin tuna.

7. The first technical meeting between Member States' experts and the Commission services took place on 14 September 2012. This technical meeting showed a general interest in focussing the review of the bluefin tuna recovery plan in particular on monitoring and compliance aspects. In addition, practical monitoring and control issues that have come up during the 2012 fishing campaign will have to be addressed in detail through the Compliance Committee.
8. The formal preparation of this year's annual ICCAT meeting will shortly begin at the level of the Working Party for External Fisheries policy.
9. An exchange of views in the October Council between the Commission and Member States would provide the only opportunity to commonly reflect at that level on expectations before the November annual ICCAT meeting. The Commission services are preparing an information note (doc. ST 14504/12 PECHE 387) to facilitate the exchange of views.

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