



NAT/782
Multiannual management plan for bluefin tuna

OPINION

European Economic and Social Committee

Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multiannual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean, amending Regulations (EC) No 1936/2001, (EU) 2017/2107, and (EU) 2019/833 and repealing Regulation (EU) 2016/1627

[COM(2019) 619 – 2019/0272 (COD)]

Rapporteur: **Gabriel Sarró Iparraguirre**

Consultation	Council, 06/12/2019 European Parliament, 16/12/2019
Procedural basis	Articles 43(2) and 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
Section responsible	Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment
Adopted in section	06/03/2020
Adopted at plenary	07/05/2020
Plenary session No	Remote meeting
Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	251/0/10

Conclusions and recommendations

1. The EESC welcomes the adoption of a multiannual management plan for bluefin tuna fisheries in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, since the current level of biomass for this population, at a historic high, means that the emergency measures introduced under the earlier recovery plan can be dropped.

1.1

1.2 The Committee considers that laying down a multiannual management plan in the European Union, that ensures the application of the measures set out in Recommendation 18-02 adopted at the 21st special meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) in 2018, is the best way of maintaining stocks above biomass levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield, taking account of the specificities of the different types of gear and fishing techniques used in these fisheries.

The EESC would suggest that the legislators update the proposal for a regulation in order to incorporate the amendments agreed in 2019 by the ICCAT in its Recommendation 19-04.

1.3 The Committee considers that Article 29(3) of the proposal should be amended to bring it into line with Recommendation 19-04, as explained in point 4 of this opinion.

1.4 Summary of the Commission proposal

1.4

2. The purpose of the proposal for a regulation considered in this opinion is the application of the multiannual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean adopted by the ICCAT, with a view to ensuring biomass levels above those capable of producing maximum sustainable yield.

2.1

2.2 Those Member States with bluefin tuna fishing opportunities will have to draw up annual fishing plans that include the quotas allocated to each gear group, the criteria used for the allocation, the measures to ensure the respect of individual quotas, the fishing seasons, designated ports, the rules on by-catches and authorised vessels.

2.2

2.3 Member States with bluefin tuna fishing opportunities must also establish annual fishing capacity management plans to adjust their fleets to the allocated fishing opportunities, annual inspection plans to ensure compliance with the regulation and annual farming management plans to set the estimated amount of bluefin tuna available for farming. All these plans are to be transmitted to the Commission by 31 January of each year.

2.3

2.4 The technical measures set out in the regulation comprise a limit on fishing seasons for specific fleets, such as purse seiners and large scale pelagic longline vessels, a minimum authorised size generally of 30 kg or minimum length of 115 cm, together with a level of authorised by-catches which must not exceed 20% of the total catches on board at the end of each fishing trip.

2.4

The control measures to be applied by the Member States include an obligation to submit, one month before the start of the period of authorisation, lists of all catching vessels authorised to fish actively and commercially exploit bluefin tuna resources, and lists of traps. The Commission must

2.5

also be provided with detailed information on the fishing activity by authorised vessels in the preceding year, including the catches of each vessel, and with information on any joint fishing operations that have taken place.

2.6 Masters of vessels of less than 12 metres (the fisheries control regulation¹ already establishes a requirement for those of 12 metres or more) are required to notify the competent authority of the relevant Member State, at least four hours before the estimated time of arrival in the port, of the quantity of bluefin tuna caught, the geographical area where the catches were taken, and the identification of the vessel. In addition, transshipment at sea by Union fishing vessels carrying bluefin tuna, or by third country vessels in Union waters, is prohibited.

2.7 The Member States are to be responsible for implementing a national observer programme ensuring minimum cover of percentages determined according to the various fleet segments, and must also ensure the presence on board of an ICCAT observer for purse seiners. Any transfer operations must be notified in advance to the relevant Member State for authorisation or, where appropriate, refusal; video cameras must be used to verify the number of fish transferred. Similarly, caging of specimens must be notified in advance and monitored via video cameras.

Monitoring and surveillance will be ensured by a vessel monitoring system for vessels with a length equal to or greater than 12 metres, and inspections will be carried out under the ICCAT Joint Scheme of International Inspection.

2.8 The trade, landing, import, export, placing in cages, re-export and transshipment of bluefin tuna that is not accompanied by the validated documentation set out in the regulation is prohibited.

2.9 **General comments**

3. In general terms the EESC agrees with the proposal for a regulation, as it transposes an ICCAT recommendation. Likewise, it welcomes the results of the recovery plan which has brought bluefin tuna biomass to the highest levels since records began.

3.1 In 2019 ICCAT Recommendation 19-04 was adopted amending Recommendation 18-02, which is the subject of the present opinion. The Committee therefore suggests that the legislators adapt the proposal for a regulation in line with Recommendation 19-04.

3.2 **Specific comments**

4.1 Article 29(3) lays down that Union purse seiners shall not engage in joint fishing operations with purse seiners from other contracting parties to the ICCAT convention, although paragraph 62 of Recommendation 19-04 provides that "(...) However, a CPC² with less than five authorised purse seine vessels may authorise joint fishing operations [JFO]with any other CPC.

¹ Regulation (EE) No 1224/2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy.

² Contracting party to the Convention.

Each CPC conducting a JFO shall be responsible and accountable for the catches made under this JFO".

4.2 The Committee considers that the proposal for a regulation should take account of the exception set out in the previous point: i.e. it should allow joint fishing with other CPC fleets. The Committee nevertheless considers that a protocol should be agreed on a bilateral basis in advance on the operational arrangements to be followed by the vessels and, in particular, by the authorities of each CPC on handling the catch declaration documents required by the current rules.

Brussels, 7 May 2020

Luca Jahier

The president of the European Economic and Social Committee
