



ADVICE

LDAC Recommendations in relation to some Atlantic Tuna & Tuna-Like Stocks ICCAT Annual Meeting - Vilamoura (Portugal), 14-21 November 2016

Date: 11 November 2016

Reference: R-09-16/WG1

1. Tropical tunas (Yellowfin, Skipjack and Bigeye)

Considering that:

- The **Yellowfin tuna** (YFT) stock (*Thunnus albacares*) is in healthy condition, although despite the TAC is set at levels that will likely allow to reach MSY levels by 2020, there are still concerns on the high levels of mortality of juvenile specimens expressed by the Scientific Council and which turns to place the stock in in the border of yellow area of the matrix known as "Kobe plot". However the issue of juveniles is already addressed in the Recommendation n 15-01 adopted by ICCAT in 2015 with measures limiting the number of FADs and a new closed area for fishing with FADs, which must deploy its full effects as from the next year.
- There are no concerns about **Skipjack tuna** (SKJ) stock (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), because of their biological characteristics of rapid growth. For this reason, there is no any specific conservation measure required at this stage.
- The advice of the SCRS for the **Bigeye tuna** (BET) stock (*Thunnus obesus*), which is in a worse situation, has not changed. Last year, ICCAT decided for a significant reduction of the TAC in 2016 from 85,000 t to 65,000 t (-23%) which alone will allow the stock to rebuild to MSY level with 50% chances by 2020.

The LDAC:

- Understands that the EU wants to reopen the ICCAT Recommendation 15-01 for Tropical Tuna stocks adopted last year in order to take into account the recommendations of the working groups on FAD. The LDAC a priori is not in favour to reopening discussions of issues adopted last year. ICCAT should concentrate on ensuring compliance of the approved measures before introducing new obligations.
- Considers that the Commission should make sure that such reopening, if takes place, should not concern the aspects of the resolution that were agreed after long and difficult debates last year and for which its implementation and compliance is yet to be completed, i.e. the Bigeye tuna quota reduction and FADs related issues which are not of technical content and for which SCRS has not produced any advice.



- Encourages the Commission to look for ways to speed and strengthen the process to develop management strategies evaluations for tropical tuna fisheries as well as Harvest Control Rules to ensure long-term sustainability of these resources.
- Reiterates its advice submitted last year¹ in favour of a strict compliance with the current TAC for all CPCs, supported by an increase in the rate of observer coverage on board fishing vessels targeting tropical tuna and a prohibition of transshipments at sea in 2017 as such operations are often the way to circumvent reporting of catches and exercise illegal fishing activities particularly for non EU longline fleets.

For **the three tropical tunas stocks**, the LDAC advocates to enforce the existing measures of the Recommendation 15-01 and make it fully applicable, namely through the implementation of moratoria from 1/1/2017 and a proper level of compliance on FAD management not only by the European fleet but also for the other ICCAT CPCs.

The LDAC supports the continuation of the ICCAT FAD Working Group, which met in 2015 and 2016 and is composed both by scientists and managers. The LDAC is of the opinion that the FAD WG should continue its work in 2017, in particular in order to develop clear guidance on FADs management and the EU to follow the recommendations of this WG.

North Atlantic Albacore Tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*)

The LDAC is pleased to see that, there despite the uncertainty in the assessment which leads to a precautionary advice from SCRS, the stock is in a good situation clearly placed in the Green area of the Kobe plot. Given that the EU is a major player in this fishery (i.e. Spanish, French, Irish and Portuguese fleets) and this stock has an important for economic viability of operators, we would like to ask for an increase of the current TAC.

The LDAC also recommends to introduce the necessary safeguards in terms of control measures (e.g. positive list or registry of vessels...) and progress in the definition and adoption of Harvest Control Rules (HCR) from 2018 onwards allowing a transitional period to undertake the necessary scientific research programmes that underpin the process as well as the development of a Management Strategy Evaluation that allow to manage the fishery to do a multiannual basis and also review its performance.

Blue Shark (*Prionace Glauca*)

The LDAC supports the EU on his intent to table a proposal on a fully-fledged multiannual management plan for this fishery in line with the CFP both for the North Atlantic and the South Atlantic stock for 2017.

¹ LDAC Advice on Management of Bigeye Tuna Stock in the Atlantic R-04-15/WG1 (November 2015): <http://ldac.eu/download-doc/91455>



This is believed to contribute to significantly improve the data quality and availability, develop Harvest Control Rules to also achieve a regulated fishery through a more stable and sound management of a stock in the medium and long term consistently with the current good biological status of the stocks.

However, the LDAC is concerned with the setting of a maximum level of reference catch limits and the access of non EU CPCs to the quotas through a reference period catch track record (including those from developing countries).

The setting of reference catch limits could surface the real volume of catches, as up to date there are only few CPCs reporting on them, namely the EU concerned Member States (Spain and Portugal), and Japan. There is an urgent need for those non-compliant CPCs to provide accurate data of their total catches.

For both the North and South Atlantic stocks, the LDAC would be in favour of setting as first step a catch limit consistent with an average of the current highest real catches of the long distance fleet targeting this species in the last years. This is consistent with SCRS advice as it would allow a sustainable exploitation of the fishery from both a biological and economic point of view.

EU naturally-attached shark fins policy

The LDAC is pleased to see that substantial progress has been made in the adoption of the naturally-attached fins policy for sharks at RFMO level in the North Atlantic, first in NEAFC (November 2015) and subsequently in NAFO (September 2016).

The LDAC encourage the Commission to maintain momentum and actively engage in bilateral and multilateral dialogues seeking support of more CPCs in order to achieve the adoption of this policy also in ICCAT this year. This would be a fundamental step for a sustainable exploitation of the shark stocks, and is considered a complementary set of measures to those already proposed for improving the traceability and management of the shark stocks.

Atlantic Swordfish Tuna (*Xiphias gladius*)

The LDAC agrees with EU proposals formulated at the last preparatory meeting on 18 October 2016 for the Northern and Southern Atlantic Stocks of proposing a roll-over of TAC for 2017 plus strengthening of the control measures both to EU and foreign fleets to ensure the long-term sustainability of the stocks.

General considerations

A pillar of the new CFP external dimension is that it applies the same sustainability standards outside EU waters as are applied in Community waters. For example, the new CFP calls for taking into consideration environmental and social criteria when allocating access to resources: the allocation of access should reward/not penalise those who fish most sustainably. To ensure a consistent implementation of the CFP, the EU should adopt a similar approach in tuna RFMOs.

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