

Multiannual plan for Bluefin tuna

The European Union is a contracting party to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), responsible for the management of these stocks and the fisheries exploiting them. Elements of international commitments made by the EU in ICCAT between 2012 and 2014, which are not already part of EU law, should be included therein. This also provides the occasion to group measures on a multiannual recovery plan for Bluefin tuna within a new regulation.

Background

Regional fisheries management organisations ([RFMOs](#)), such as the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), are international fora for cooperation on the management of fisheries at the level of given seas or sea areas. The [ICCAT](#) is the RFMO responsible for agreeing on coordinated measures for the conservation of tunas and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean and its adjacent seas. The European Union is a [contracting party](#) to ICCAT since 1997. In consideration notably of the Union's exclusive competence for 'the conservation of marine biological resources under the Common Fisheries Policy', no Member State is a party on its own (except France and United Kingdom as far as parts of their national territory not covered by the Treaties may be concerned). Decisions ('recommendations') adopted by ICCAT are binding on the parties, but are not directly applicable as such to individual vessels and nationals and must be transposed into the law of the parties.

About 30 fish species fall under the remit of ICCAT, among them [Bluefin tuna](#) (BFT). This highly valuable species, which can also be fished and kept alive, caged and fattened, possibly for months, before being sold for consumption, has been subject to intense overfishing for many years. In 2006, ICCAT established a 15-year recovery plan for this stock in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean. These measures have subsequently been reviewed regularly and ICCAT adopted new recommendations on BFT over the years, notably to reinforce control of fisheries and associated technical means. The positive trend in stock recovery led ICCAT parties to agree in 2014 on a progressive increase of the BFT total allowable catch as from [2015](#) (for the EU, the fishing fleets concerned are from Cyprus, France, Greece, Croatia, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain).

What is proposed

The current Regulation (No [302/2009](#)) on a multiannual recovery plan for Bluefin tuna was last amended in [2012](#), with the European Parliament acting as co-legislator in line with the Lisbon Treaty. Beyond incorporating the 2012-2014 ICCAT recommendations into EU law, in so far as their content is not already covered therein, the European Commission [proposes](#) to include all measures on a BFT plan within a new regulation. This regulation would also take into account the links with the [reformed common fisheries policy](#), notably the possibility for [derogation](#), based on international commitments, to the obligation for EU fishermen to land all their catches of species subject to catch limits or minimum sizes (discard ban).

The EP Committee on Fisheries voted on the legislative proposal on 10 December 2015 (rapporteur Gabriel Mato, EPP, Spain). Supporting the overall approach, it however opposes giving delegated powers to the European Commission to amend the BFT recovery plan, considering that the transposition of RFMO's recommendations – subsequent to international negotiations – must remain a joint EP and Council competence under the ordinary legislative procedure. The Committee on Fisheries also envisages reformulating some proposed measures along the same wording as the one adopted by ICCAT. It further considers that Member States should pay particular attention to non-industrial fishing activities and traditional fishing methods for BFT when allocating their national quotas among their fishermen. The European Parliament is now due to vote first-reading legislative amendments to the proposed regulation ([2015/0096\(COD\)](#)).