

**Question for written answer P-004139/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Bluefin tuna

At the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) meeting in November 2013, the Commission rejected any possible EU initiative to amend Recommendation 12-03, which regulates bluefin tuna fishing in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

The Commission is well aware that the season laid down in the Recovery plan for bluefish tuna is preventing the small-scale Canary Island fleet from fishing for the species, as it has done for decades, since this season does not tie in with the period when bluefin tuna can be found in the region's waters. However, the Commission delegation refused to propose the amendment requested by the Member States. In contrast, Norway obtained a similar amendment for its own fleet on the same grounds. Were it not for the intervention of the Spanish delegation, Canary Island fishers would not have been able to carry out any bluefin tuna fishing in 2014.

Despite the fact that scientific reports supported an increase in the quotas, the Commission, acting on behalf of the EU, rejected any such increase, including the 500-tonne rise explicitly agreed by the Scientific Committee and the Member States. As a result, when the Canary Island fishery (the first in the year for the eastern stock) opened on 24 March 2014, it was forced to close again barely 24 hours later as it had already met its allocated quota, with individual fish weighing in at an average of 200-300 kg. This data clearly suggests that the bluefin tuna population could easily withstand an increase in 2014 quotas and that the situation faced in the Canary Islands will inevitably recur in other regions.

In view of the fishery developments in the Canary Islands:

- Is the Commission satisfied at having prevented an increase in bluefin tuna quotas?
- Does the Commission still believe that the fishery data does not support an increase in the quotas?
- How is the Commission going to explain to EU fishers that, despite confirmation of the excellent state of the bluefin tuna stock, it is giving its backing to tiny quotas that in no way reflect current biomass levels?
- Is the Commission planning to adopt any measures to enable fishers to offset the damage caused by the meagre quotas?
- Will 2014 be the year when the Commission finally accepts that it can no longer keep peddling the myth that the bluefin tuna is a species at risk from overfishing, and that given the abundance of stocks the total allowable catches (TAC) should be substantially increased?