

International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT): management, conservation and control measures applicable in the Convention Area

2016/0187(COD) - 03/10/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 590 votes to 72, with 10 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down management, conservation and control measures applicable in the Convention Area of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1936/2001, (EC) No 1984/2003 and (EC) No 520/2007.

Scope of the Regulation: Parliament clarified that the Regulation should also apply to **third country** fishing vessels.

Moreover, the measures provided for in the Regulation should apply in addition to those laid down in [Regulation \(EC\) No 1224/2009](#) on controls and [Regulation \(EC\) No 1005/2008](#) on illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU regulation).

Implementation of ICCAT recommendations: the amended text clarified that when implementing those recommendations, the Union and Member States should endeavour to promote **coastal fishing activities** and the use of fishing gear and techniques which are **selective** and have a reduced environmental impact, including gear and techniques used in traditional and artisanal fisheries, thereby contributing to a fair standard of living for local economies.

Management plans for North Atlantic swordfish: Members clarified that management plans should be submitted by the Member States to which a quota has been allocated.

Blue marlin and white marlin: the amended text provided that, when their quota is being approached, Member States shall ensure that vessels flying their flag release all blue marlin and white marlin that are alive by the time of boarding.

When a Member State has exhausted its quota, it shall ensure that the **landings** of blue marlin and white marlin that are dead when brought alongside the vessel are not sold or entered into commerce. Such landings shall not count against that Member State's catch limits, provided that such prohibition is clearly explained in the annual report referred to in the Regulation.

For the **recreational fisheries** of blue marlin and white marlin, a minimum conservation size of 251 cm and 168 cm lower jaw fork length shall apply respectively.

Breakdown of fishing opportunities for bluefin tuna and swordfish between Member States: the general principle should be that when allocating fishing opportunities for bluefin tuna and swordfish stocks available to them, Member States shall use transparent and objective criteria, including those of an environmental, social and economic nature.

In addition, they shall: (i) endeavour to distribute national quotas fairly among the various fleet segments giving special consideration to traditional and artisanal fishing; (ii) provide incentives to Union fishing vessels deploying selective fishing gear or using fishing techniques with reduced environmental impact.

Declaration by the European Parliament: the legislative resolution is accompanied by a declaration in which the European Parliament expresses its concern that the Commission is proposing to implement, in 2017, ICCAT Recommendations that date back to 2008.

Apart from the fact that this is challengeable before the Court of Justice, Parliament considered that this leads to **legal uncertainty for operators** and a situation in which the institutions are about to adopt ICCAT recommendations that are obsolete and outdated.

The European Parliament therefore urged the Commission to forward any future proposal for transposition of Recommendations from regional fisheries management organisations within **a maximum of six months from the date of their adoption**.

While welcoming the recommendation of ICCAT establishing a **multi-annual recovery plan for Mediterranean swordfish**, Parliament stressed that this plan would only be successful if efforts were made by neighbouring third countries to efficiently manage this species.

Lastly, it stressed that quotas have to be distributed fairly among operators, taking into account production values and turnover. Quotas illegally fished by driftnets should not count towards the calculation of historic catches and rights.