Conservation of the Southern Bluefin Tuna: conservation and management measures

2021/0242(COD) - 28/07/2021 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to implement into EU law the relevant control, conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT).

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: the CCSBT is the regional fisheries management organisation (RFMO) responsible for managing Southern bluefin tuna (Thunnus maccoyii – SBF) through its area of distribution. The CCSBT has a mandate to adopt conservation and enforcement measures for the fisheries under its purview, and these are binding on its contracting parties.

To promote cooperation in the conservation and management of Southern bluefin tuna, the CCSBT has created the Extended Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (Extended Commission), in which the EU can participate as a member. Decisions adopted by the Extended Commission become decisions of the CCSBT at the end of the annual meeting session to which they were reported, unless the CCSBT decides to the contrary, which to date has never occurred.

The purpose of this proposal is to implement into Union law CCSBT measures that are binding on members of the Extended Commission.

CONTENT: the proposed Regulation lays down provisions concerning management, conservation and control measures relating to by-catch of Southern bluefin tuna (Thunnus maccoyii) under the Convention for the Conservation of the Southern Bluefin Tuna. It implements the relevant resolutions of the CCSBT adopted until 2020, except for measures which already form part of Union law.

The proposed Regulation covers only the CCSBT provisions applicable to the EU, notably taking into consideration the specificity of the Union fleet (no targeted fishery, exclusively accidental by-catch in the past and none since 2012, no transhipments or landing) and the trade of Southern bluefin tuna. In practice, most obligations will be only triggered if the Union fleet accidentally by-catches Southern bluefin tuna, which has not occurred since 2012, and retains those fish on-board, something that has not been reported to date.

The proposal includes:

- the ban on targeting of the Southern bluefin tuna, with only by-catches being allowed. EU fishing vessels that could by-catch the species shall be registered in the CCSBT record of vessels;

- the implementation of the CCSBT catch documentation scheme (CDS). By-catches of Southern bluefin tuna shall be tagged with catch tagging forms, while import, export and re-export documents are mandatory for the trading of Southern bluefin tuna;

- validation and verification of catch monitoring documents and tagging forms by flag Member States, as well as implementation of the CCSBT provisions on reviews and investigations related to the CDS and the maintenance of CDS records;

- the fixing of a SBF tag containing information on each whole SBF at the time of harvesting where SBF by-caught by Union fishing vessels is intended for export or re-export;

- the obligation to tranship SBF in port. Flag Member States will have to designate ports for transhipment of SBF for vessels flying their flag and communicate with the designated port States in order to share the information necessary for effective monitoring;

- implements the duty to cooperate in providing fishing vessels' data for: the investigation of incidents; cooperation related to the inclusion of a Union fishing vessel on the CCSBT Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) vessels list; reported cases of non-compliance; port inspection infringements;

- implements duties relating to monthly catch reports, and to annual and compliance reporting.

The proposal provides for delegated powers to be granted to the Commission to cater for amendments to CCSBT measures and ensure that EU fishing vessels are on an equal footing with those of other contracting parties. Examples of such measures are: the CCSBT Record of Vessels Authorised to Fish for Southern Bluefin Tuna; aligning the CCSBT's Ecologically Related Species measures with those of other tuna RFMOs; and reporting deadlines.