

Multiannual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean

2019/0272(COD) - 30/06/2023 - Council position

The Council adopted its position at first reading with a view to the adoption of a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, amending Regulations (EC) No 1936/2001, (EU) 2017/2107 and (EU) 2019/833 and repealing Regulation (EU) 2016/1627.

The objective of the regulation is to implement the multi-annual bluefin tuna management plan adopted by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), which aims to maintain a biomass of bluefin tuna above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield.

The Council's position at first reading aims to implement ICCAT Recommendation 18-02 and certain parts of ICCAT Recommendation 22-04 into EU law in order to enable the EU to fulfil its international obligations and to provide operators with legal certainty as regards rules and obligations.

The main issues agreed with the European Parliament include:

- the conditions for the carry-over of non-harvested live bluefin tuna from previous years' catches within a farm may be permitted only if a reinforced system of control is developed and reported by the Member State to the Commission. If carry-over is permitted, Member States responsible for farms must submit an annual carry-over declaration to the Commission by 25 May each year. The quantities carried over will be placed in separate cages or series of cages on the farm, on the basis of the catch year;
- provisions concerning the allocation by Member States of sectoral quotas within their annual fishing plans, including for artisanal fisheries: Member States with small-scale coastal vessels authorised to fish for bluefin tuna will allocate a specific sectorial quota for those vessels and shall include such allocation in their fishing plans. They will also include additional measures to closely monitor the quota consumption by that fleet in their monitoring, control and inspection plans;
- the provisions on the allocation of fishing opportunities: Member States will have to make further efforts to ensure a fair and transparent distribution of fishing opportunities between small-scale, artisanal and larger fleets;
- rules on the caging of bluefin tuna;
- the responsibility to launch investigations into irregularities concerning catches of bluefin tuna: where there is a difference of more than 10 % in number between the estimates made by either the ICCAT regional observer, relevant Member States control authorities and/or the farm operator, the Member State responsible for the farm shall initiate an investigation in cooperation with the Member State or CPC responsible for the catching vessel and/or trap.