

Advice Notice 165: Request to amend the harvest control rules for northern longfin tuna

Background:

- ICCAT's recommendation of 15/07 states that the "management strategy evaluation (MSE) is an inclusive, interactive and iterative process for evaluating, inter alia, the performance of proposed harvest control rules and reference points in relation to management objectives, including the risk associated with not achieving those objectives."
- All of ICCAT's recommendations defining the harvest rules for northern longfin tuna include a dual precautionary stock management objective (60% probability of Kobe plot green zone; recovery) and catch maximisation, both on average and in the long term.
- In 2023, ICCAT will perform a stock evaluation and new fishing options are expected to be set for 2024-2026, which will at least involve the adoption of a recommendation amending the 21-04 recommendation.
- The ICCAT 21-04 recommendation stated in Article 14A that new, more refined modelling would be performed by SCRS, and the results of that modelling were released in autumn 2022.
- Since 2018, all European fleets have seen their yields significantly increase, requiring the implementation of highly restrictive quota management measures and very early quota closures.
- The European Union is a major importer of tuna. Maximising the longfin tuna catch that can be fished and landed near European consumers and factories will help decarbonise some of Europe's tuna consumption.

Analysis:

- When this stock was last evaluated, SCRS estimated that the fishing mortality applied in 2018 only represented 62% of the fishing mortality associated with the maximum balanced harvest (MBH), and that this stock sat in the green zone of the Kobe diagram, with a 98% probability. The TAC (33,600 tonnes) was then set lower than the MBH (37,082 tonnes) during the 2018-2020 management period, and the catch in 2021 was significantly lower than the MBH. It is therefore highly likely that the new scientific evaluation performed this year again shows significant under-harvesting of this stock.
- CC Sud has issued many advice notices about northern longfin tuna management (e.g. 130, 142 and 154), each time reiterating its desire to configure the harvest control rules to achieve the two aforementioned objectives.
- For European commercial fishers involved in longfin tuna fisheries, capping the total allowable catch (TAC) using an F-Target value of 0.8 results in an excess of caution for managing other communities. In fact, for other stock not in a recovery phase, all TACs are set in line with the fishing mortality associated with the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) as set out in the preventive control plan (PCP).



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- It is important that the northern longfin tuna harvest rules be regularly evaluated and, if necessary, optimised in order to boost the probability of fully achieving all of the objectives.
- As part of a long-term strategy, and to avoid as much as possible any decrease in fishing opportunities, European commercial fishers may agree to a slight capping of the F value associated with the MSY when determining fishing opportunities, but without leading to a flagrant under-exploitation of the stock.
- According to the 2022 SCRS report, the F-Target value may be raised from 0.8 to 0.9 without compromising the sustainability objective for this stock. Table 17.23.1 in that report states that simply by raising the F-Target value to 0.9, the probability of being within the green zone of the Kobe diagram would be 61.65%.

Recommendations:

The members of CC Sud ask of the European Commission and Member States involved:

- That all efforts be made to increase the F-Target value from 0.8 to 0.9 for northern longfin tuna fisheries.
- That the TAC for the 2024-2026 management period be set by applying the new F-Target value of 0.9.
- That new scientific research be undertaken to define quantified objectives alongside the catch maximisation objectives set out in the management recommendation.