



International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)

Annual Meeting, November 16–23, 2026

This Position Statement outlines issues that we urge the ICCAT Commission to act on at its upcoming meeting.



COMPLIANCE PROCESSES

2026 Asks

- Advance the Committee's work to streamline and strengthen the ICCAT Compliance Committee (per COC_323A/2025), including through the development of indicators and mechanisms to monitor compliance trends over time, and track actions and responses from CPCs
- Adopt procedures to identify and address non-compliance with TAC allocations

Background

A strong and transparent compliance process improves fisheries management by holding regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) members accountable. ICCAT has one of the most well designed and transparent compliance assessment processes of the five tuna RFMOs, but it can continue to be strengthened. ISSF and Pew Charitable Trusts have recommendations to improve RFMO compliance processes in workshop reports: [2020 report](#), [2021 report](#), [2022 report](#).

Priorities to Progress

- Undertake a focused review of data reported by ICCAT Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities (CPCs), including any information provided to the Secretariat by CPCs from their national observer programs, of live and dead discards of sharks, particularly shortfin mako, and take corrective actions as needed

[RFMO Compliance Information & Resources](#)



TUNA STOCK MANAGEMENT

Tuna Conservation Measures

2026 Asks

- Ensure any changes to the tropical tuna recommendation maintains [bigeye](#), yellowfin, and skipjack tuna catches at sustainable levels, consistent with SCRS advice
- Fully allocate the TAC for yellowfin tuna or adopt an alternative mechanism to ensure future compliance with the agreed TAC
- Adopt a new TAC for Southern albacore ensuring that catches are maintained at sustainable levels
- Request the SCRS to update the eastern Atlantic skipjack stock assessment in 2027

Effective Management Procedures (Harvest Strategies)

2026 Asks

- Accelerate the development of multi-stock management procedures for bigeye, yellowfin and Eastern skipjack tuna
- Formalize the development of a management procedure for Southern albacore by requiring a dedicated Panel 3 meeting in 2027
- For Northern albacore, adopt the TAC advice for the period 2027-2029 that results from the current management procedure, or an alternative one, if adopted

Background

No new stock assessments for tropical tunas were carried out in 2026. However, catches of Eastern Atlantic skipjack tuna in 2022, 2023 and 2025 exceeded the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) level estimated by the latest (2022) stock assessment. The SCRS recommended that the Commission consider implementing interim management measures aiming at maintaining the stock at sustainable levels until the next stock assessment. The SCRS recommended to re-assess the stock in 2027, which will be useful for advancing the multi-stock tropical tuna Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE).

Yellowfin tuna catches declined substantially in 2025 to just under the 110,000-tonne total allowable catch (TAC). Nonetheless, the SCRS continues to be concerned that existing conservation and management measures appear to be insufficient to limit harvest. The SCRS recommended that the Commission establish a mechanism to ensure that the catches of yellowfin tuna do not exceed any adopted TAC.

The SCRS conducted a new assessment of Southern albacore and found it to be slightly overfished, but not subject to overfishing. The new assessment found the stock to be less productive than previously estimated. As a result, the TAC should be revised to a lower level than the current 28,000 t - closer to the 2025 catch (21,000 t).

Management Procedures (MPs) provide a modern mechanism for fisheries management that accounts for uncertainty in an explicit and precautionary manner. ICCAT has successfully adopted MPs for Northern Atlantic albacore, Atlantic bluefin tuna, Western Atlantic skipjack, and Northern Atlantic swordfish. In 2026 the SCRS ran the adopted MP for Northern albacore, which resulted in a TAC of 50,000 t for 2027-2029. The SCRS also presented alternative candidate MPs for the stock, which result in similar or somewhat lower TACs, but still much higher than recent catches. The 2026 SCRS revised MSE Roadmap also includes a multi-stock MSE for tropical tunas and planned MSE work for Southern albacore, which requires input from Panel 3. As many ICCAT stocks do not have an MP yet, it is important to finalize and adopt those that are well developed and prioritize future MP work for other stocks.

Priorities to Progress

- Advance the development of MPs for ICCAT target tuna species
- CPCs should review historical catch data for Mediterranean albacore in terms of completeness and accuracy before a new assessment can be attempted

[Tuna Conservation Information & Resources](#)



FAD MANAGEMENT

2026 Asks

In line with ISSF's established approach to strengthening FAD management:

- Develop monitoring strategies to ensure that the transition timeline to biodegradable FADs is effectively implemented
- Develop and adopt a requirement for provision to ICCAT of near real-time FAD position and acoustic biomass records data for scientific use with a maximum time lag of 90 days to protect confidentiality
- Develop FAD loss and abandonment mitigations options, including both prevention measures and incentive/disincentive-based policies

Background

Rec. 24-01 strengthened FAD management provisions, particularly by requiring the use of fully non-entangling FADs without netting and establishing a timeline for the transition to biodegradable FADs. Biodegradable FADs are particularly important to reduce the environmental impact of tropical tuna purse seine fisheries. Several research projects provide sufficient scientific evidence that biodegradable FADs perform similarly to conventional FADs. Therefore, the current timeline to transition to biodegradable FADs adopted in Rec. 24-01 should be maintained.

Other measures to enhance FAD monitoring and management have not yet been discussed. It is important for ICCAT to address these issues and, in line with [existing best practice](#), consider the adoption of new provisions to strengthen and improve FAD management.

Priorities to Progress

- Develop and adopt an effective FAD marking scheme for both FAD structure and geolocating buoy
- Develop and adopt clear rules for FAD ownership and for FAD buoy activation and deactivation
- Establish a timeline to develop a FAD register

[FAD Management Information & Resources](#)



ELECTRONIC MONITORING (EM) AND REPORTING & OBSERVER COVERAGE

2026 Ask

- Increase observer coverage (human and/or electronic in accordance with the adopted [minimum EM standards](#)) on large-scale longline vessels to an interim level of 20%

Background

Comprehensive observer coverage is critical to effective fisheries management, compliance monitoring, and independent verification of catch, effort, species composition and bycatch. 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic) for major fisheries is feasible and necessary, as is required for purse seine vessels in most RFMOs. ICCAT's minimum 10% observer

coverage requirement for longline vessels fishing for tropical tunas is still too low for bycatch estimates to be reliable and EM can help increase coverage. In 2023, ICCAT adopted [minimum EM standards](#) and program requirements for both purse seine and longline fisheries. CPCs with longline fisheries should embrace this opportunity to improve monitoring.

Priorities to Progress

- Adopt a timeline to progressively reach 100% observer coverage in industrial tuna fisheries, including all vessels engaged in at-sea transshipment
- Adopt a workplan and timeline to develop a Regional Observer Program for tropical tuna fisheries

Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Information & Resources



MONITORING, CONTROL & SURVEILLANCE MEASURES

Transshipment Regulation

2026 Asks

Adopt revisions to Rec. 24-15 to strengthen the regulation of at-sea transshipment and [align it with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines](#), including:

- Expand formal procedures for sharing transshipment data between RFMOs and enhance public disclosure of transshipment event information; and
- Align the transshipment declaration to fully meet the Annex I of the FAO Guidelines

Record of Vessels

2026 Ask

Adopt amendments to Rec 21-14 to require fishing vessels targeting ICCAT species, regardless of size, to be registered in the ICCAT Record of vessels, and to require all vessels with an overall length of 12 m or greater to have an IMO number.

Background

Transshipment at-sea presents risks for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and other unlawful activities if it is not well-managed and transparent. ICCAT has the most comprehensive transshipment framework among tuna RFMOs. However, adoption of specific amendments to Rec. 24-15 would bring [it further in alignment with the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines](#) for Transshipment — resulting in a stronger framework that would ensure more complete data collection and data sharing to combat IUU fishing activities.

RFMO vessel records or authorized vessel lists identify those vessels that are authorized to fish in the respective RFMO area of competence. Authorizing vessels is fundamental for flag State control and forms the primary basis for management and enforcement. Depending on the type of data collected, these lists can provide critical information for fishery stock assessments, [and for estimates of fishing effort, operational fleet capacity, and regional fleet composition](#). In 2017, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) expanded its IMO number eligibility criteria down to a size limit of 12m for vessels authorized to operate outside of waters under the national jurisdiction of the flag State. ICCAT requires IMO numbers for vessels 20m length overall or greater. [Targeted improvements are needed](#) in ICCAT's Record of Vessels to ensure inclusion

of all vessels regardless of size fishing for ICCAT species, require an IMO number for all vessels eligible to receive one, and to establish mandatory minimum data fields for all registered vessels.



BYCATCH MITIGATION & SHARK PROTECTIONS

2026 Asks

- Require all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached without exceptions
- To allow the North Atlantic shortfin mako stock to continue to rebuild, ensure that total removals do not exceed 1,500 t annually
- Request the SCRS to review science-based mitigation techniques for seabird bycatch so the Commission can adopt revisions to Rec.11-09 that reflects up-to-date scientific bycatch mitigation best practices

Background

ICCAT prohibits shark finning through a provision that the weight of fins landed cannot exceed 5% of the total shark catch on board. The fin-to-carcass ratio can vary considerably depending on the species, the dressing of the carcass, and on the different ways fins are cut, therefore creating difficulties in enforcement and accurate data collection. Requiring sharks to be landed with fins-naturally attached addresses those difficulties. Despite growing global agreement on “[fins naturally attached](#)” (FNA) as the most effective and enforceable tool for preventing finning, in 2025 ICCAT once again did not adopt a FNA requirement. Modernizing ICCAT’s finning regulation remains a critical priority for 2026 to ensure accurate species-specific landings data and robust enforcement.

A new stock assessment for Northern shortfin mako was carried out in 2026, which indicates a change in stock status from the 2017 assessment. This assessment found that in 2024 the stock was overfished but no longer subject to overfishing. This shift in status is attributed to updated new biological estimates of growth and natural mortality, as well as a very substantial reduction in catches since 2015. The new projections show that the stock can be rebuilt to the MSY level in two generation times if total removals do not exceed 1,500 t annually.

The current management measure for seabirds (Rec. 11-09) is outdated and no longer aligned with best-practice mitigation techniques, such as those of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP). For example, Rec. 11-09 provisions on branch line weighting and tori lines do not fully meet ACAP specifications, and it does not include hook shielding devices as a standalone option.

[Bycatch Reduction Information & Resources](#)



LABOR & SOCIAL ISSUES IN TUNA FISHERIES

2026 Ask

- Develop and then adopt a binding crew labor and safety resolution

Background

Tuna RFMOs must adopt binding measures to protect crew that work in tuna fisheries worldwide that align with relevant international frameworks for worker rights in global fisheries.



Background

Experts agree that there is overcapacity, too many vessels, in the global tuna fleets. Fishing fleet overcapacity increases pressure to weaken management measures, and eventually it leads to stock overexploitation.

Priorities to Progress

- Establish limited entry through closed vessel registries and develop a common currency to measure fishing capacity, such as cubic meters of well volume