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**REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON LARGE PELAGICS (WG2)
PARIS, CNPMEM, 15TH OCTOBER 2013**

Participants: see attached list

Coordinator: Mario Ferretti

Documents attached: Agenda, slides presented by Neil Ansell and by Fabrizio Donatella

- 1) WG2 on large pelagics met in Paris on 15th October 2013 with the aim of analyzing the results of the control and inspection activities carried out on Bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean in 2013 by the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA); a further aim was to receive information on the scientific results that emerged from the ICCAT Scientific Committee (SCRS) as well as to prepare proposals to present to the EC in view of the forthcoming annual ICCAT meeting.
- 2) The Chari, Mr Romiti, opened the meeting and greeted the participants present in the CNPMEM meeting room. The RAC MED Chair, Mr Buonfiglio, thanked the CNPMEM for its hospitality and for this significant gesture by the French associations, which decided to restart activities in collaboration with RAC MED in view of the serious management problems and the state of resources in the Mediterranean.
- 3) The Executive Secretary took the floor in order to present Agenda item 2 concerning the nomination of the WG2 coordinator. Mario Ferretti was confirmed as coordinator by all the participants. The Agenda was approved with no changes and therefore discussion began on the matters detailed in the Agenda.
- 4) The coordinator, Mr Ferretti, passed the floor to Neil Ansell, representative of the EFCA, who briefly presented the results of the inspections carried out during the 2013 Bluefin tuna fishery season, he underlined that the EFCA coordinates the work of the Member States by means of Joint Deployment Plans (JDP) in order to implement the activities of control and surveillance at sea with the human and material resources available. For the year 2013, the possible non-compliances mainly involve the documentation as well as cases in which tolerance levels concerning technical measures were exceeded.



- 5) The coordinator thanked Mr Ansell for the presentation and passed the floor to Fabrizio Donatella, who presented slides summarizing the Bluefin tuna fisheries season divided per Member State. He also informed the participants on the results of the annual SCRS meeting that was held at the end of September in Madrid, revealing that an increase in the CPUE “*catch per unit effort*” of Bluefin tuna was detected, however in all the reports by the Scientific Committee the data are uncertain due to the incompatibility of the historical time series. Where Mediterranean Swordfish fisheries are concerned, the SCRS established that, in order to reduce “*F*” (fishing mortality) it is necessary to reduce fishing capacity. Lastly, for Mediterranean Albacore, very few data are available, there is also little information on biomass, therefore a precautionary approach is applied.
- 6) The coordinator thanked Mr Donatella and passed the floor to Alessandro Buzzi, Federcoopescas, (who participated as an observer at the annual SCRS meeting) to present the results in greater detail. Where Bluefin tuna is concerned, new stock assessments are not planned therefore the existing levels of uncertainty remain, and this is why, as detailed in the final report (available on the ICCAT website), the Scientific Committee cannot provide a robust opinion in the matter of increasing the quotas. The next stock assessment will be carried out in 2015, unless an explicit request is made to bring it forward to 2014, which could be formulated by the ICCAT Commission in Cape Town this coming November.

Where Mediterranean Swordfish is concerned, the spawning stock biomass has decreased by about 30% compared to the 1980s (reference parameter), and the levels of SSB are about 5% less than the MSY goals established by ICCAT. The SCRS recommended that the Commission should introduce measures within a specific management plan that aim at reducing Swordfish fishing capacity. In view of the forthcoming stock assessment planned for 2014, precise data will be necessary on fishing effort and capture, discards and CPUE indices. The Scientific Committee stressed the need to gather data on the historical time series and to set up a data collection system; it will also be necessary to encourage studies that aim to improve gear selectivity in order to limit capture of juveniles. Further studies will also need to be carried out concerning the spatial and temporal distribution of the stocks, by means of tagging campaigns among other methods. Where Mediterranean Albacore is concerned, the biomass is thought to be stable, the main issue is the lack of available data. The SCRS therefore advised the Commission to make every effort to recover the historical catch time series, or to establish an efficient monitoring system within the CFP. In the meantime, due to the high level of uncertainty, management measures will need to be established to limit the increase in fishing effort and capture. Mr Buzzi concluded by informing the participants that the SCRS meeting had also provided an opportunity to present the developments in the research programme on Bluefin tuna GBYP, relative to data collection, aerial observations, biological sampling, tagging and the development of new models for stock assessment. In this last phase of the research programme, the Commission has decided to



adopt a more complex approach where Bluefin tuna tagging is concerned, by involving pole and line fishing vessels, midwater tuna trawlers and fixed tuna nets to tag both adults and juveniles. UNIMAR was assigned the task of tagging adult specimens in the Tyrrhenian Sea using surrounding nets deployed from fishing vessels. It is expected that there will be interesting developments in the research underway on size estimation models.

Where aerial observation is concerned, the Commission decided to amplify the study areas to cover almost all the Mediterranean. UNIMAR was assigned the task of flying over the Tyrrhenian, Adriatic, Ionian and Aegean Seas, confirming the aggregation areas identified in the previous phase (southern Tyrrhenian, Sicily Channel, Balearic Islands, Cyprus).

- 7) The Coordinator thanked Mr Buzzi and passed the floor to the participants for any questions. AMOP, EMPA and GKTS intervened to request clarifications concerning the presentation of the EFCA as some differences were detected in the data compared to the declarations made on purse seiners, given the additional presence on board of a regional ICCAT observer. Could the differences depend on the control methods? Mr Donatella attempted to reply, stating that DG MARE is not made up of inspectors, and furthermore, where the caging of farmed tuna is concerned (this year occurring only in Spain and Malta) there was in fact a difference in the quantities of caged tuna compared to that declared by the operators. It could be opportune to consider improving the estimation system.
- 8) ALCP had three queries, one addressed to Mr Ansell, one to Mr Donatella and one to Mr Buzzi. Mr Ansell was asked to quantify the costs of this Bluefin tuna fisheries campaign, as this year 178 inspectors were employed. He was also requested to declare the financial resources allocated for surveillance by each EU country. Mr Donatella was asked to explain why the EC does not take any steps to request an increase in the Bluefin tuna quotas, given the signs that this species is increasing in number, as also confirmed by fishers – it was remarked that it appears to be easier to reduce quotas than to increase them. Mr Buzzi was asked to provide a personal evaluation of the meeting, and whether any members of the scientific community had expressed criticism of the significant investments made in this context. In conclusion, it was suggested that the sector should be promoted and with this aim an increase in the quota was proposed.
- 9) The Federcoopescas representative asked whether the EC will pay more attention to distinguishing between the industrial fisheries sector and the small-scale sector now that the picture is clearer. More attention to longliners was requested in the allocation of the quotas, the matter of the low level of tolerance is a significant problem. He concluded by recalling that the Council of Ministers would meet two days later to discuss this matter, given the discrepancy in the data he asked whether the EC intended to intervene and propose new solutions in view of the forthcoming ICCAT annual session.



10) The CRPMEM LR delegate took the floor, informing the meeting that he was present during the monitoring carried out on longliners, and stated that the controls have a substantial margin of error and it is unthinkable that such errors can restrict the quota system. Mr Donatella replied stating that the inspections are not carried from Brussels, the decisions are made at national level and during this year coordination by all the administrations involved was excellent.

Mr Ansell informed the meeting that it is difficult to obtain clear numbers concerning joint controls that are carried out for Bluefin tuna, resources employed by the Member States.

Mr Buzzi took the floor to reply to the enquiry made by ALCP, he clarified that the levels of uncertainty where Bluefin tuna is concerned are due not only to the data but also to the models used in stock assessment. The Chair of the SCRS underlined that the committee is only required to provide scientific opinions, the management policies are the responsibility of the ICCAT plenary session.

11) Lega Pesca took the floor and stated that the communications made by the scientific committees (STECF e SCRS) concerning Swordfish were not particularly alarming until a few years ago, it was therefore suggested that we wait for the application of the measures described in ICCAT Recommendation 11-03, because either they have not been applied or they have not yet provided results.

12) EAA took the floor and highlighted that the inspections by the EFCA and by the Member States are carried out on vessels authorized for Bluefin tuna fisheries, however a lot of illegal and uncontrolled fisheries take place and data on this phenomenon should be provided. Mr Ansell replied to EAA stating that the EFCA carries out inspections on non-authorized vessels as well.

13) CEPESCA suggested that it would be appropriate to consider the possibility of improving the control methods, so that the SCRS data are no longer so uncertain. The EC was therefore requested to foresee standardization so that the percentage error is the same across the board. Lastly an increase in the quotas was requested in acknowledgment of the efforts made by the fishers.

GKTS intervened to underline that the inspections carried out on purse seiners need to take place when the fish are caught.

14) The coordinator stated that the high number of infractions where bycatch is concerned was due to the fact that Bluefin tuna stocks are not depleted and therefore it is relatively easy to exceed the percentage of tolerance. He concluded by recalling that, while tuna Bluefin stocks are being built up, there will be other stocks that are depleted, such as Sardines.



- 15) CEPRR presented the joint document on recreational fisheries in which the request was made to establish a separate quota for sport fishing; it was also requested that this document be annexed to the RAC MED opinion.
- 16) WWF recalled that no new assessment was carried out and therefore it is not possible to request that the scientific community establish a new recommendation without the necessary research. The SCRS confirmed the positive trend of the Eastern Bluefin tuna stocks towards recovering and that scientists are working on a new methodology in order to improve the quality and therefore the accuracy of the assessment.
- 17) AEPPT made an enquiry concerning recreational fisheries: how will catch controls be carried out in this sector? Who will carry out the inspections and under what conditions? The coordinator replied, explaining that recreational fisheries do not request higher quotas, but that a specific authorization to fish be issued by the competent authorities of each Member State for those wishing to fish tuna for recreational purposes. They also request a seasonal catch limit, within the limits of the allocated quotas, for each vessel authorized (maximum two pieces). EAA stressed that, in Italy, each recreational fishing vessels must be in possession of the necessary authorization and is also required to keep a log of catches.
- 18) ETF took the floor and pointed out that the socio-economic impact is being underestimated, such impact occurs without increasing the Bluefin tuna quotas and it would appear that the stocks are being safeguarded more meticulously than the relative fishing sector.
- 19) A representative of the Prud'homie de Marseille intervened to request that recreational fisheries be regulated in the same way as professional fisheries.
- 20) The coordinator took the floor and asked the participants if there are proposals for the opinion to be submitted to the EC. KGZS proposed the division of the opinion so as to have that of the professional fisheries sector, that of the WWF and that of recreational fisheries.
- 21) AGCI AGRITAL recalled that the two opinions, that presented by WWF and that concerning recreational fisheries would be annexed to that of the fisheries professional, as it had not been possible to reach a compromise; it was hoped that ExCom members would approve this proposed arrangement. A summary was made of the aspects/problems raised by the participants during the meeting and a possible proposal for an opinion concerning Bluefin tuna was read out.

Lega Pesca proposed that part of the opinion be dedicated to Swordfish, in which it would be requested that, before adopting any other measures, we await the effects of the management measures described in the ICCAT Recommendation.



22) The text of the opinion was approved and the coordinator requested that the Secretary asked the Secretary to prepare the document in English only, so as to send it to the ExCom members in order to receive written approval and therefore present it to the forthcoming coordination meeting between DG MARE and the stakeholders, in view of the annual ICCAT meeting scheduled for 18th October.

