

Recommendation nº 64

Conservation and Management of Species within the scope of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas 2025

Considering the negotiations to be held at the 25th Special Meeting of ICCAT in November 2025, the Outermost Regions Advisory Council (CCRUP) wishes to highlight several key measures concerning tuna fishing in the European Outermost Regions (ORs), underlining the importance of these species for the socioeconomic sustainability of the fishing communities in our Regions.

Recalling that the [9th paragraph of Recommendation 24-01 \(ICCAT\)](#) emphasises that *"Small-scale fisheries, including those operating in the overseas territories and Outermost Regions (ORs) of a Contracting Party, should be given special consideration with regard to their specificities and needs"*¹, the CCRUP considers that **the allocation process of fishing opportunities to the ORs continues to be inequitable.**

Also considering point 31 of Part IV of Recommendation 24-01 (ICCAT) *"In order to reduce fishing mortality of juvenile Bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) and yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*), fishing for Bigeye tuna, yellowfin and skipjack tuna with purse seines and bait boats in association with fish aggregating devices (FADs), as well as the activities of support vessels for these fleets, will be duly prohibited for a period of 45 days in 2025, from 17 March to 30 April, throughout the Convention area. In 2025, the SCRS should estimate the expected effects of the measures contained in this and previous recommendations, in particular the possible effects of increasing the catch limits of Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) with purse seine vessels on the mortality of juvenile bigeye tuna, based on the new bigeye tuna stock assessment, and should revise the K2SM. The Commission should consider, as appropriate and based on the work of the SCRS, whether to modify the FAD closure period or establish additional measures at its 2025 Regular Meeting. If the Commission fails to agree on additional measures in 2025, a FAD closure period of at least the same duration will remain in place for 2026 and 2027."*

¹ International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) (2025). *Report for biennial period, 2024-25. Part I* (2024), Vol. 1. Madrid, Spain.

The CCRUP recommends that the European Commission apply the precautionary principle and extend the FAD closure period by increasing its duration from 2025 onwards, with a view to the total elimination of this type of device by 2030, in line with the European sustainable development strategy.

1. Recreational fishing in the Canary Islands, Azores and Madeira:

In the Canary Islands, the recreational fishing fleet is larger than the commercial fleet and, in many cases, has greater resources. This activity has been increasing, partly because of insufficient control.²

In general, there are no precise data on the quantities, species or sizes of fish caught, nor on the direct illegal sales of fish to consumers. However, based on the empirical experience of local members, it is estimated that it reaches significant quantities³, impacting pelagic fisheries due to competition for access to fish schools.

Recreational fishing should be developed in a manner that does not jeopardise the sustainability of fish populations or the viability of commercial fishing.

The CCRUP therefore recommends that the European Commission extend the restrictions and conditions applicable to recreational fishing, as it remains insufficiently regulated despite the amendments of the Control Regulation (EU) 2023/2842 in 2023.⁴

2. Quota transfers between Member States

Considering that Article 16 of the Common Fisheries Policy⁵ establishes that Member States "*may, after notifying the Commission, exchange among themselves all or part of the fishing opportunities allocated to them*" and further considering that the quotas for Albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*), Bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*), and particularly Bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*), allocated to the Portuguese Member State, are low.⁶

² Examples: La Provincia (2024, 8 June). *Quince denuncias por pesca ilegal del atún en aguas de Lanzarote*; Canarias7. (2024, 12 February). *Identifican numerosas infracciones de pesca y marisqueo recreativo en la costa entre Agaete y Mogán*.

³ Jiménez Alvarado, D. (2016). *Recreational fishing in the Canary Islands: main aspects and evolution* [Doctoral thesis, University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria]. Institutional repository of the University of La Laguna.

⁴ EUROPEAN UNION. Regulation (EU) 2023/2842 (EU Fisheries Control Regulation) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 November 2023 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 and other regulations as regards fisheries control. *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 202, 20 Dec. 2023.

⁵ European Union. (2013). Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC. *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 354, 22-61.

⁶ European Union. (2013). Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council

Whereas Article 17 of the same regulation⁵ states that Member States shall use *"transparent and objective criteria, including environmental, social, as well as economic criteria (...), such as the environmental impact of fishing, compliance record, contribution to the local economy and historical catch levels. (...) Member States shall endeavour to provide incentives for fishing vessels using selective fishing gear or fishing methods with a reduced impact on the environment (...)"* and that sustainable management of marine resources seeks to ensure the long-term conservation of fish stocks, thereby minimising environmental impacts and ensuring the socio-economic future of fishing activities, to preserve the ecological balance and well-being of fishing communities.

The CCRUP therefore recommends enhanced solidarity among the Member States of the Outermost Regions, in view of the particularities of our territories and specificities in terms of fishing, so that they exchange or transfer quotas among them.

3. Management of tuna species relevant to the ORs

3.1 Bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*):

Considering the selectivity of fishing gear, the low level of incidental catches, as well as the good conservation and storage conditions on board, which characterise the bluefin tuna fishery practised by OR fishermen.

And further, considering that the catch of this species has played an important role in the socioeconomic sustainability of various fishing communities in our regions, the **CCRUP recommends that the European Commission maintain the existing bluefin tuna quota.**

3.2 Albacore tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*):

Considering the selectivity of the fishing gear, the low incidental catches, as well as the good conservation and storage conditions on board that are found in the fishing practised by the OR fishermen.

Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC. *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 354, 22-61.

⁶ COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. Council Regulation (EU) 2025/202 of 30 January 2025 fixing for 2025 and 2026 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and applicable for Union vessels in certain non-Union waters and amending Regulation (EU) 2024/257 as regards fishing opportunities for 2025. *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 202, 31 Jan. 2025.

Also considering that the catches of this species have played an important role in the socioeconomic sustainability of several fishing communities in the ORs, **the CCRUP recommends that the European Commission maintain the existing albacore tuna quota.**

3.3 Bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*). The case of the Azores and Madeira

Whereas the bigeye tuna quota allocated to the Portuguese Member State remains limited and the outermost regions of the Azores and Madeira account for 85% of the national quota for this species⁷; and whereas Ministerial Order No. 111-A/2024, of 31 December 2024⁸, and Ministerial Order No. 230/2023 of 4 April, as amended by Ministerial Order No. 78/2025 of 10 January⁹, lay down the minimum catch size for bigeye tuna specimens and establish restrictions on fishing for this species in the Azores and Madeira, both provide that when 50% and 75% respectively of the quota allocated to the Portuguese ORs are reached, the catch limits shall be revised, entailing a 25% reduction in the quantities to be caught.

Considering also that this year's bigeye tuna harvest began in January and that the Portuguese ORs reached 50% of their allocated quota in May¹⁰, and 75% in June.¹¹

Further considering that catches are made using artisanal and sustainable fishing gear, following the traditional "*one man, one hook, one fish*" mode, and noting the crucial role this species plays in the socioeconomic sustainability of our coastal communities.

And considering that, in previous years, the Spanish Member State transferred part of its bigeye tuna quota to the Portuguese Member State^{12.1314}

The CCRUP therefore recommends that the European Commission promote the effective use of existing mechanisms for quota exchanges between member states, unless there is a global review of the distribution criteria.

⁷ Ministry of the Sea (2020, November 10). Order no. 263/2020. Official Gazette.

⁸ Autonomous Region of the Azores. (2024). Order no. 111-A/2024 of 31 December. Official Journal of the Azores Autonomous Region, Series I, no. 149.

⁹ Autonomous Region of Madeira (2025). Ordinances no. 269/2025 and no. 270/2025, of 27 May. Official Journal of the Autonomous Region of Madeira, I Series, no. 92.

¹⁰ Autonomous Region of the Azores (2025). Ministerial Order no. 55-A/2025, of 23 May: First amendment to Ministerial Order no. 111-A/2024, of 31 December, rectified by Declaration of Rectification no. 2/2025, of 28 February, which defines the minimum catch size for Bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) and the restrictions on fishing for this species in the Azores Autonomous Region for 2025. Official Journal of the Autonomous Region of the Azores, Series I, No. 68, Supplement.

¹¹ Secretaria Regional do Mar e das Pescas - Direção Regional das Pescas (2025). *Notice of 75% consumption of the Bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) quota.*

¹² ACOPE. (2018, July 13). Spain cedes 120 tonnes of bigeye tuna quota to Portugal.

¹³ Jornal da Economia do Mar. (2018, July 13). Spain cedes 120 tonnes of bigeye tuna quota to Portugal.

¹⁴ Radio Pico. (2011, August 1). Agreement with Spain allows bigeye tuna fishing.

3.4 Tuna fishing in French Guiana:

Considering that the *Comité Régional des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins de Guyane* has already submitted three applications for experimental fishing licences¹⁵ for tuna and has conducted three successful experimental campaigns targeting bigeye tuna, yellowfin tuna and Atlantic bonito (*Sarda sarda*), **the CCRUP recommends that the French Member establish a quota for the exploitation of this resource by fishermen from French Guiana.**

3.5 Tuna fishing in Martinique

Tuna fishing in Martinique is seasonal, since 2021, they have noted the influence of very strong currents and a change in migration routes.

In this region, they fish with anchored FADs, which allows for good management of fishing resources, resulting in sustainable and eco-responsible fishing. There is no overfishing, since the gear used is selective, in the "*one man, one hook, one fish*" mode.

The fact that there is not enough scientific data on this fishery distorts assessments.

The CCRUP therefore recommends a more effective data collection that allows a real assessment of the status of fish stocks.

4. Management of shark species

The CCRUP expresses its concern at the constant non-compliance by some CPCs with [Recommendation 11-15](#), on the penalties applicable in the event of non-compliance with reporting duties, and recognises the need to strengthen data collection, including that relating to discards of sharks, both alive and otherwise, from all fleets that catch them.

As sharks are an essential structural element for the maintenance and balance of the food chain, their protection must be stepped up in all seas and oceans. In the Canary Islands, populations of sharks and other elasmobranchs represent a natural legacy that we must protect with the respect and admiration they deserve, given their nature and the roles they play in ecosystems.

¹⁵ For example: Ifremer (2018). *Avis sur les licences pour la pêche expérimentale au large (thonidés)* [Rapport technique] ; France Télévisions. (2024, June 6). *Bientôt du thon de Guyane dans nos assiettes*.

For said reason, and considering that in the Canary Islands trawling is the activity that has the greatest impact on the incidental capture of these species, that it is prohibited, and that the island artisanal fleet does not target these species, the archipelago can be a great reservoir for the conservation of sharks and other elasmobranchs (order Rajiformes), if the appropriate measures are adopted (for example, publicity and awareness campaigns, banning and controlling the activity of the surface longline fleet, both national and foreign, and approving more marine protected areas). In this way, Canary Islands waters could also represent a safe migratory corridor for highly mobile species.

We therefore recommend that the European Commission present an initiative to ICCAT to increase restrictions and bans on shark and elasmobranch fishing in general, as well as requesting the Spanish member state to ban the catching of sharks and elasmobranchs in Canary Islands waters, especially by the surface longline fleet operating in the Canary Bank, with or without a base port in the Canary Islands, in application of Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No. 1380/2013.

4.1 Blue shark (*Prionace glauca*)

The CCRUP recommends that the EU promote the development of Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) procedures for both northern and southern blue shark stocks, based on the results of the feasibility study which demonstrated that the development of MSE-assessed management procedures is feasible, financially efficient and consistent with the current ICCAT framework for Management Strategy Evaluations (MSE).

Therefore, the CCRUP recommends that the European Commission set preliminary management objectives later this year, with the aim of finalising the development of management procedures by 2027, such as adopting strategies for the North and South Atlantic blue shark stocks at the 2027 ICCAT meeting.

4.2 Shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*):

In 2019, shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) were included in [Appendix II of the CITES \(Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora\)](#), which requires exporting countries to prove the sustainability of their catches. Given the lack of such proof, the Scientific Review Group (SRG) of the European CITES

authorities decided in September 2022 to ban imports and exports of shortfin mako caught in the South Atlantic.

Recommendation 21-09 establishes a total mortality limit of 250 tonnes for the North Atlantic, with the aim of allowing at least a 60 to 70% probability of recovery of this fish stock by 2070. However, despite the retention ban on shortfin mako in the North Atlantic in force since 2022, annual mortality continues to exceed 1,000 tonnes, as most sharks are discarded dead, and the overfishing situation in the North Atlantic also occurred in 2023.¹⁶

Considering the results of the stock assessments forecast for 2025 and considering the high vulnerability of the shortfin mako to overfishing, due to: its biology, late sexual maturation and high overlap with fisheries targeting the blue shark, **the CCRUP recommends that the European Commission:**

- 1- Agree at this year's ICCAT meeting on effective measures to reduce the mortality of the shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*), and that these be implemented by 2026;**
- 2- Request the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) to study and propose measures for high interaction areas,** considering existing information on juveniles and hotspots provided by the CPCs, and that the SCRS present recommendations on temporal and/or spatial closures of these hotspots for adoption by ICCAT no later than 2026;
- 3- Advocate at the ICCAT annual meeting for additional measures to effectively reduce shark mortality, such as replacing wire leaders with other materials** (as practised by Azorean fishermen);

¹⁶ International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (2025). *Report for biennial period, 2024-25. Part I (2024) - Vol. 2.*

Opinion of the *Asociación Tinerfeña de Amigos de la Naturaleza, Cooperativa de Pesca Açoriana, Federação das Pescas dos Açores, Federación Provincial de Cofradías de Pescadores de Santa Cruz de Tenerife and European Transport Workers Federation:*

Considering the second paragraph on the first page on the process of allocating fishing opportunities, these organisations argue that: "*Considering that the 9th paragraph of Recommendation 24-01 (ICCAT), emphasised that "Small-scale fisheries, including those operating in overseas territories and Outermost Regions of a Contracting Party, should be given special consideration with regard to their specificities and needs" , we are of the opinion that the process of allocation of fishing opportunities for the ORs remains inequitable and therefore the CCRUP recommends that this paragraph be strengthened through the direct allocation of quotas by ICCAT for the ORs' fisheries."*

Opinion of the *Asociación Tinerfeña de Amigos de la Naturaleza, Cooperativa de Pesca Açoriana, Federación Provincial de Cofradías de Pescadores de Santa Cruz de Tenerife and Federação das Pescas dos Açores:*

Considering the second, third and fourth paragraphs of the fifth page on Bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*), these organisations argue that: "*Considering that the catches are practised using artisanal and sustainable fishing gear, in the "one man, one hook, one fish" register, and taking into account the important role that this species plays for the socioeconomic sustainability of our coastal communities, the CCRUP recommends to the European Commission, the increase of the bigeye tuna quota for the Portuguese Member State, which in turn should increase the quota for its ORs."*

Opinion of the *Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins :*

Considering the third paragraph, on the seventh page, about the Shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*), this organisation argues that: "*Taking into account the results of the stock assessments planned for 2025 and considering the high vulnerability of the shortfin mako to overfishing, due to: its biology, late sexual maturation and high overlap with fisheries targeting the blue shark, the CCRUP recommends that the European Commission:*

- 1- *Agree at this year's ICCAT meeting on effective measures to reduce the mortality of shortfin mako and have them implemented as soon as possible:*

- 2- *Ask the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) to study and propose measures for high-interaction areas, considering existing information on juveniles and hotspots provided by CPCs, always bearing in mind the socio-economic restrictions that could affect commercial fishing;*
- 3- *Advocate at the annual ICCAT meeting for additional measures to effectively reduce shark mortality, adapted to the different fishing gears represented by the CCRUP.*

The President of the Executive Committee of the CCRUP,

(Ruben Farias)