

Recommendation n.º 84**Conservation and Management of Species within the framework of the
International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) - 2026**

Having regard to the importance of the sustainable management of marine resources, which refers to the responsible use of fishery resources, ensuring the long-term conservation of stocks, minimising environmental impacts and securing the socio-economic future of fishing activities, so as to preserve the ecological balance and the well-being of fishing communities.

Whereas the management of the species under ICCAT's competence must be based on the best available scientific knowledge and on effective and preventive conservation measures.

Having regard to the negotiations to be held at the 25th Special Meeting of ICCAT, scheduled for 16 to 23 November 2026, the Advisory Council for the Outermost Regions (CCRUP) considers it a priority to strengthen the management of tunas and shark species, to improve the scientific monitoring of fisheries and to strengthen science-based management processes.

1. Panel 1: Management of tropical tunas (*Thunnus albacares*, *Thunnus obesus* and *Katsuwonus pelamis*)

1.1. MSE process for tropical tunas

The multispecies Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process has been under development since 2018 and the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) has already indicated that the Management Procedure (MP) will not be ready for adoption in 2026, as initially envisaged. In this context, the **CCRUP recommends that the European Commission encourage the SCRS and the members of Panel 1 to establish a work roadmap** with clearly defined objectives, responsibilities and deadlines, as well as the necessary technical and scientific resources, so as to ensure that the Management Procedure can be adopted in 2027, avoiding further postponements.

The CCRUP further considers that the development of the Management Procedure must be based on management objectives that are sufficiently ambitious and consistent with those adopted for other ICCAT fisheries.

Accordingly, it recommends that the European Commission advocate revising the objective relating to the probability of being in the green zone of the Kobe plot to a level of at least 60% for the three tropical tuna stocks, so as to bring it into line with the other stocks under an MSE process.

Likewise, the CCRUP considers that the safety objective should be harmonised with **Rec. 25-02** recently adopted for skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*) of the Western Atlantic (W-SKJ), establishing that the probability of any stock falling below Blim (the biomass limit reference point) at any time during the projection period (30 years) does not exceed 10%.

Lastly, the CCRUP recommends that the European Commission promote an in-depth technical discussion during the last annual meeting of Panel 1, which precedes the ICCAT meeting, ensuring that there is sufficient time to analyse the preliminary MSE results and to debate the configuration of the future Management Procedure.

1.2. Yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*)

The CCRUP recommends that the European Commission support the conclusion of the negotiations on the definition of an allocation table for yellowfin tuna fishing opportunities. The absence of an agreement on the allocation of quotas has hampered the effective application of the management measures for this stock. In this context, the CCRUP considers it important for the European Union (EU) to contribute constructively to reaching a consensus among the Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities (CPCs).

It should also be borne in mind that the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) currently in force, set at 110,000 tonnes by **Rec. 11-01**, has remained unchanged for around 15 years and has been systematically exceeded, with overruns in practically every year since its adoption, in some cases of more than 40%. Yellowfin tuna is currently in a good state of conservation, and **the CCRUP recommends the setting of a TAC consistent with the current state of the stock, which would be between 125,000 and 128,000 tonnes.** The adoption of a new TAC based on the most recent scientific advice (13.1 YFT, 2025)¹ and the definition of a transparent and widely accepted allocation mechanism therefore constitute an essential element in strengthening compliance with the conservation measures and ensuring more effective and sustainable management of the fishery.

¹ ICCAT (2025) *Executive Summary: YFT – Atlantic yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*)*, ICCAT Report 2024–2025 (II), Section 13.1.

1.3. Aquaculture initiatives and Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) and yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) farming in cages in the OR: the need for prior consultation with the sector

The CCRUP recommends that the European Commission and the Member States should not include in their negotiating position vis-à-vis ICCAT any proposal concerning the development of aquaculture or tuna purse seine fishing in the waters of the ORs without prior consultation with and the express consent of the fisheries sector represented within the CCRUP, in accordance with the principles set out in Regulation (EU) No 2026/249 and Article 3 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, which it elaborates upon. More specifically, with regard to the “Draft ICCAT Recommendation for a pilot project on the farming of bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) and yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) in the waters of the Canary Islands”, presented by the European Union at the 29th ordinary meeting of ICCAT (Seville, November 2025), that its withdrawal be considered, given that the Canary Islands’ fisheries sector was not consulted on the matter.

2. Panel 4: Management of Other Species (swordfish, billfishes and small tunas)

2.1. Shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*)

The CCRUP recommends maintaining strict conservation measures for North Atlantic shortfin mako, including the prohibition on retention on board, until the results of the stock assessment and the corresponding scientific advice make it possible to determine, with a high degree of certainty, that any relaxation of the measures is compatible with the recovery and conservation of the stock. The scientific projections and assessments must be interpreted in the light of the high uncertainty associated with the biology, productivity and post-release mortality of this species. Studies on the life cycle and post-release mortality continue to provide relevant information for stock assessments. In particular, the CCRUP considers that any decision on possible retention on board must apply the precautionary principle and take into account not only the mortality resulting from retained catches but also dead discards and the post-release mortality of specimens released alive. Rec. 21-09 establishes this approach by regarding total fishing mortality as the sum of retention on board, dead discards and post-release mortality.

2.2. Blue shark (*Prionace glauca*)

The definition of clear and measurable management objectives is one of the fundamental pillars of any MSE process, making it possible to assess different management strategies against previously agreed biological, ecological and socio-economic objectives. Accordingly, the **CCRUP recommends that the European Commission adopt this year a set of ambitious and precautionary management objectives for the two blue shark stocks in the Atlantic**, taking into account the differences between the North Atlantic and South Atlantic stocks and the need to ensure that future management strategies effectively contribute to maintaining both stocks at levels consistent with ICCAT's conservation objectives. **The CCRUP also recommends that these objectives include indicators relating to stock status, safety, yield and stability**, and that sufficiently cautious thresholds be set to prevent management measures from reacting only after a significant deterioration in the state of the stock has occurred.

2.3. Atlantic blue marlin (*Makaira nigricans*)

The CCRUP calls for the utmost vigilance as regards the allocation of Atlantic blue marlin fishing opportunities, currently called into question by some Caribbean and Central American CPCs. This quota is of great importance for the artisanal fleets of the ORs, for which it is at once an essential economic resource and a pillar of food sovereignty. These historically established fisheries depend directly on the maintenance of the current allocation keys. Accordingly, the **CCRUP recommends that the European Commission advocate, in the negotiations, maintaining the allocation keys in force in the face of the requests for revision made by some CPCs. Should the allocation key be amended, it will be essential to take into account the European Union's historical rights and to retain a quota sufficient to cover the needs of the EU Member States. Particular attention should be paid to the ORs, for which this resource represents a significant socio-economic challenge.**

2.4. Other relevant species and measures

Extension of the retention ban to all thresher shark species (*Alopias spp.*), in line with the growing international recognition of the need to strengthen the protection of these species and

with their inclusion in Appendix I to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

The use of wire leaders may increase the probability of retention and capture of certain vulnerable species, such as the shortfin mako, and the silky shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*), by reducing the probability of specimens cutting or breaking the fishing line and escaping before being hauled on board. This may increase the mortality associated with these interactions and reduce the possibilities of releasing specimens alive.

Accordingly, the **CCRUP recommends prohibiting the use of wire leaders in longline fisheries, with a view to reducing the catch and retention of sensitive species and promoting the survival of released specimens.**

Should this measure not be feasible immediately, account should be taken of the interaction between the type of set and the size and type of hook on catch rates, the bait used, retention on board, the post-release mortality of shark species and the characteristics of the fishing operation. In this regard, the assessment of this measure may help to identify solutions that reduce the mortality of these species without compromising fishing activity, in line with the precautionary approach and ICCAT's conservation objectives. Moreover, and before any restrictive measures are implemented, it is imperative that a scientific study be carried out to assess the impact of this type of measure, both on vulnerable species and on the target fisheries.

The **CCRUP also recommends the adoption of minimum standards of good practice for the handling and release of sharks returned to the sea**, aligned with the conservation measures adopted, in particular those established for North Atlantic shortfin mako through Recommendation 21-09 and for South Atlantic shortfin mako through Recommendation 25-08, as well as with the scientific guidance drawn up within the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). The adoption of harmonised protocols will make it possible to establish specific procedures to reduce injury and stress during handling and to promote the survival of specimens after release, which will help to reduce post-release mortality, to reduce variability in handling practices between fleets and to ensure more effective and consistent implementation of the conservation measures, drawing on the experience already gained by other Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) in this field.

2.5. Protection of sharks and elasmobranchs in the Canary Islands

Sharks and other elasmobranchs play a fundamental role in the functioning of marine ecosystems, as keystone species for maintaining ecological balance and the structure of food webs, and also contribute to the conservation of the populations of species of fishing interest. Enhanced protection of these species in the Canary Islands area would help to increase the resilience of marine ecosystems and to ensure the long-term sustainability of fishery resources and of the region's artisanal fishing.

The delimitation of the spatial scope of the hundred nautical miles is based on Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, which establishes a specific regime of access to the waters surrounding the ORs, allowing access to the marine biological resources in that zone to be reserved to vessels registered in the ports of those regions. That legal regime constitutes an appropriate basis for promoting enhanced conservation measures adapted to the ecological, biological and socio-economic particularities of the Canary archipelago, among which is the protection of sharks and other elasmobranchs.

Accordingly, the **CCRUP recommends that the European Commission advocate, with the Spanish Member State, the adoption of a ban on directed fishing for sharks and other elasmobranchs within the hundred nautical miles around the Canary Islands and, in parallel, promote the declaration of a special protection area for these species in that geographical area**, with the aim of strengthening their conservation and ensuring the effectiveness of the management measures adopted.

3. Monitoring

The CCRUP recommends that the European Commission support the revision of Recommendation 16-14, on the establishment of minimum standards for scientific observer programmes on board fishing vessels, **promoting the gradual increase of scientific observer coverage in longline fisheries to a minimum of 20% of fishing activity**. This measure of revision, recommended by the SCRS since 2019, is considered essential to improve the quality of the scientific data and to strengthen the monitoring of bycatch and of interactions with vulnerable species, with the aim of reinforcing the coverage requirements and improving the quality and

representativeness of the scientific data needed to monitor catches, bycatch, discards and interactions with vulnerable species.

However, and without calling into question the importance of maintaining high requirements as regards fisheries observation, it is important to build in proportionality and gradualness in the event of an increase in the observer coverage rate, particularly as regards small-scale fisheries, where taking observers on board may prove difficult owing to the associated technical, safety and legal constraints. Differentiated treatment according to the size of the vessels and the creation of specific derogations for smaller units are further avenues to be considered.

4. Standing Committee on Finance and Administration (STACFAD)

The CCRUP recommends that the European Commission support the inclusion, in the ICCAT budget, of a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Coordinator post, as proposed by the SCRS. The creation of this function will facilitate coordination between the SCRS, the species groups, the external experts and the Secretariat, strengthening the coordination, efficiency and consistency of the MSE processes developed by ICCAT,

In addition, the CCRUP considers that this function could help to optimise the use of the available resources since, according to the justification presented within the SCRS, carrying out part of the analyses through a specialist based in the Secretariat could reduce the need to resort to external consultancy, generating savings in the medium and long term.

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

These organisations consider that it should be recommended that consideration be given to applying an exception as regards fishing opportunities for the artisanal fishing fleets of the ORs, bearing in mind that the “one man, one hook” fishing system does not put the populations of this species at risk.

Opinion of *Europêche*, of *Organización de Productores Asociados de Grandes Atuneros Congeladores* (OPAGAC), of *Organisation des Producteurs de Thon Congelé et Surgelé* (ORTHONGEL) and of *Union des Armateurs à la Pêche de France* (UAPF)

As regards the 3rd paragraph of point 1.1, “MSE process for tropical tunas”, these organisations consider that it is premature to determine the probability values for each stock being in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot, and do not accept the application of the proposed 60% probability to each stock. They consider that various probability ranges should be explored in the multispecies Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process, in particular their consequences for the management of these stocks (“trade-offs”). Only then will the Commission have the information necessary to determine the management objectives (e.g. probabilities) relevant to each tropical tuna stock.