



Introduction

Since the previous February edition of the ICCAT Newsletter, the following events can be outlined:

- ICCAT was pleased to see its Chair, Martin Tsamenyi back after a long recovery period. He was able to make a long trip from Australia to participate in two intersessional meetings and chair the SWGSM meeting held in June in Madrid.
- The vacancy position of the ICCAT Executive Secretary was announced this year. After the first screening five candidates have been shortlisted to be interviewed at the forthcoming Commission meeting in November to select a new Executive Secretary.
- The Secretariat has participated in several international meetings, such as: The First Working Group on the Implementation of FAO Port State Measures Agreement to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported held in June, Oslo, Norway) ([link](#)); the SDG 14 Conference ([link](#)); and the Fourth session of the Preparatory Committee BBNJ DOALOS ([link](#)).

Meetings

2017 has been a very busy year for ICCAT. Four Intersessional meetings of the Commission, ten SCRS and a joint tuna RFMOs meetings have been held:

Intersessional Commission Meetings

- Panel 4 's **Mediterranean Swordfish Working Group agreed** on a fair and equitable allocation scheme of the TAC of Mediterranean swordfish ([Report](#))
- The **Working Group on Convention Amendment**
- The **Ad Hoc Working Group to Follow up on the Second Performance Review** agreed on tasks to be carried out by the various subsidiary bodies of the Commission based on the issues identified in the Second independent ICCAT Performance Review ([Report](#))
- The **Standing Working Group on Dialogue between Fisheries Scientists and Managers** revised the status of the development of Harvest Control Rules (HCRs) and agreed on a set of recommendations to the Commission on management objectives, performance indicators and HCR for priority stocks ([Report](#))

Intersessional SCRS Meetings

The SCRS has been particularly active and conducted the assessment of seven stocks of four different species (albacore, shortfin mako sharks, swordfish and bluefin tuna):

- The **Sharks species group** held a data preparatory meeting and conducted a stock assessment for the North and South Atlantic shortfin mako shark stocks (last assessment took place in 2012) ([data preparatory Report](#) and [stock assessment Report](#))
- The **Albacore species group** conducted a stock assessment for the Mediterranean stock based on data poor model (last assessment took place in 2011) and revised further developed work related to MSE for North Atlantic stock ([Report](#))
- The **Swordfish species group** held a data preparatory meeting and conducted a stock assessment for the North and South Atlantic stocks (last assessment took place in 2013) ([data preparatory Report](#) and [stock assessment Report](#))
- The **Bluefin tuna species group** conducted a new stock assessment for the western and eastern and Mediterranean stocks (last assessment conducted in 2014) ([data preparatory Report](#) and [stock assessment Report](#))

Other intersessional meetings of the SCRS included:

- The **Small tuna species group** updated the Ecological Risk Analysis (ERA) using the new life history parameters dataset developed by the Group for each of the five major ICCAT areas and extended the ERA to other gears (*i.e.* purse seines) ([Report](#))
- The **Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods** continued the revision of the MSE process on northern Atlantic albacore including the Harvest Control Rule ([Report](#))
- The **Sub-committee on Ecosystems and By-catch** continued the development of an Ecosystem report card and how to present EBFM to the Commission. The SC also reviewed analysis on the interactions of ICCAT fisheries with sea turtles and seabirds



1st Joint tuna RFMO FAD Working Group meeting

This meeting was held in Madrid (Spain) and hosted by ICCAT with the financial support of the European Union and the FAO Common Oceans ABNJ tuna project, involving IATTC and IOTC, and a wide range of stakeholders. This meeting arose from a decision from the Kobe process Steering Committee that identified the benefits of coordinating the work of t-RFMOs on FAD related issues. A list of key areas for future action for the joint t-RFMO FAD WG was approved and the need to hold a Joint t-RFMOs FADs Working Group ([Report](#)).

ICCAT Research programmes

Phase 7 of the *Atlantic-wide Research Programme on Bluefin Tuna (ICCAT GBYP)* continued activities (e.g. data recovery, biological studies, tagging trials and modelling approaches) and new studies were initiated (*i.e.* aerial surveys in the Mediterranean Sea). Additional information can be found [here](#).

Since last February the *Atlantic Ocean Tropical tuna Tagging Programme (AOTTP)* has continued to tag tuna, most recently off South Africa, Brazil, Uruguay, USA Atlantic coast, and the Madeira archipelago. To date more than 55,000 tropical tunas have been tagged and more than 9,000 recovered with their valuable associated metadata. Otolith reading and general tag data analytical workshops are also scheduled ([tagging progress](#)).

Small Tunas Year Programme (SMYTP) continued the recovery of historical fisheries statistics and conducted biological studies on key population parameters for selected small tuna species off the northeastern coast of Africa and southwestern Europe. A new cooperative and coordinated approach was recently approved as such activities are essential to conduct small tuna assessments in the near future.

Enhanced Programme for Billfish Research (EPBR) continued its activities, namely in terms of the collection of billfish fisheries statistics off the western coast of Africa. The objectives of EPBR have recently been expanded to evaluate adult billfish habitat use, study spawning patterns and population genetics, as these studies are essential to improve billfish assessments.

Shark Research and Data Collection Programme (SRDCP) focused efforts on four major activities which are essential for shortfin mako shark assessment, namely: pan-Atlantic age and growth study; population genetics to investigate stock structure and phylogeography; stock boundaries, migrations and habitat use; and, post-release mortality on pelagic longline fisheries.

2017 Calendar for remaining events

September

- Tropical tuna species group intersessional meeting , 4-8 September, Madrid, Spain
- 3rd Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on FADs, 11-12 September, Madrid, Spain
- Sub-Committee on Statistics, 25-26 September, Madrid, Spain
- SCRS Species Groups meetings, 27-29 September, Madrid, Spain

October

- Meeting of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics, 2-6 October, Madrid, Spain
- Meeting of the Port Inspection Expert group for Capacity and Assistance, 9-10 October, Madrid, Spain

November

- 25th Regular Meeting of the Commission, 14-22 November, Marrakech, Morocco
([additional information on these meetings](#))