



COORDINATING WORKING PARTY ON FISHERY STATISTICS

Intersessional Meetings of Aquaculture and Fisheries Subject Groups - Joint Session

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ICCAT activities report to CWP

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I. Introduction

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) is an Intergovernmental Organization responsible for the conservation of tunas and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean and its adjacent seas. To accomplish their objectives, ICCAT compiles fishery statistics from their Contracting and Cooperating Parties (CPCs) and other entities fishing for these species in the ICCAT Convention Area, coordinates the research including the stock assessments, and develops scientific based management advice and the required mechanisms that allows the Commission to establish Conservation and Management Measures.

At present, ICCAT assesses 10 major tuna and billfish species, 3 pelagic sharks, and jointly 13 small tuna species. In addition, it also compiles by-catch information of more than 100 additional species (including seabirds, sea turtles, and mammals).

Overall, the largest amount of information associated with about 160 ICCAT data requirements (scientific, management, monitoring, and control) is managed by the ICCAT-DB system (about 43 relational databases, each with several frontend/backend tools and applications). Fisheries statistics and biological samples (examples: Task 1 annual nominal catches, Task 2 catch and effort, Task 2 size frequencies, Task 3 Domestic Observer Programmes), biological data collection, and tagging information (both conventional and electronic) are among those data collection obligations.

ICCAT continues its progressive improvement of the ICCAT-DB by developing new databases (under development: “BioSampling”: biological sampling data with information obtained through ICCAT research programs; ETagging: electronic tagging; “IssfCannery”: tuna cannery unloads reported to ICCAT by ISSF cooperating Companies [this one with a fruitful collaboration of IOTC and ISSF], etc.) and improving the existing ones (Task 1, Domestic Observer Programme data, Conventional Tagging, etc.).

ICCAT has also under development the ICCAT Integrated Online Management System (IOMS). This online system aims in the long run to replace the current ICCAT-DB system. The IOMS was released in production for the first time in August 2021 (experimental year) with the current functionality limited to the submission by the ICCAT CPCs of the 2021 annual reports (both scientific and compliance components). The modules currently under development include de Vessel record manager (Vessel registration, authorizations by fishery, chartering arrangements, Carrier vessels, transshipment authorisations, etc.) for which ICCAT has adopted the UN/FLUX for unattended submissions and updates of European Union vessel information and other ICCAT CPCs that may adopt it in the future.

This report summarizes the ICCAT relevant activities that support SDG14, since CWP-26 in 2019.

II. Review of relevant ICCAT activities since CWP-26 (2020 and 2021)

ICCAT (Secretariat, Scientific Committee and corresponding bodies, CPC experts) has ongoing several projects and specific tasks (with variable maturity stages) related to the various aspects of the fisheries information management field (data collection systems, automation processes, validation processes, harmonization, historical recoveries, etc.), all foreseeing data improvements and faster availability. The major ones with relevance to SDG14 are:

- a) Overall improvement (through standardization/harmonization) of the ICCAT data collection system, aiming to systematize data integration, validation, storage, and, availability:
 - Templates and electronic forms (now with SCRS filtering criteria for basic validation)
 - Tools for unattended/automated data integration (used in 35% of the 50 existing forms in 2021)
 - Optimization (integration, normalization, etc.) of the ICCAT-DB system for IOMS
 - Geo-referencing several databases (nominal catches, catch & effort, size samples, conventional tagging, etc.)
 - GIS system (server, layers, etc.) is under development
 - IOMS development (web services with some data APIs available to the public)
- b) Nominal catches improvements:
 - Historical catch series rebuild (majorly sharks and small tunas)
 - Species discrimination (reducing unclassified/grouped species like TUN, YOU, BIL, etc.)
 - Gears discrimination (reducing unclassified/grouped gears like UNCL, SURF, SPOR)
 - Small scale fisheries catch series discrimination (using fishing flag activities, gears, etc.)
 - Gap analyses and completeness.
 - Improving the discrimination (and recovery) of discards (dead/alive) from total catches
 - Compiling Conversion Factors used by CPCs to report live/round weight catches
- c) Improvements to higher detailed fisheries data (Task 2: catch & effort, size frequencies):
 - Dataset recoveries aiming harmonization of:
 - time resolution (all monthly based), and
 - geographical resolution (5x5 for longline fisheries / 1x1 for surface gears, with some exceptions)
 - more than one effort measurements (gear dependent/independent)

The “SCRS scorecard on ICCAT fisheries data availability” (a complement to ICCAT Res.11-14), adopted by the SCRS in 2019 (methodology published in document SCRS/2019/045) has been widely used since 2020 by the SCRS and the Commission. These quantitative benchmarks inform and compare systematically the level of fisheries data available of 41 ICCAT major fisheries (species-stock combinations) tuna and tuna-like species.

The IOMS (version 1.0 released into production on 1 August 2021) will change the way of working of all ICCAT players (bodies, CPCs, users, etc.) and will have implications in way of reporting that will require structural changes to ICCAT-DB. Two important aspects of the IOMS may have a positive impact on the CWP work long-run:

- The integration through “mapping” of CWP standard coding system in the ICCAT-DB (and therefore in the IOMS on database migration process).
- Adoption of the UN/FLUX for vessels data exchange with EU Member States.

In relation to the capacity building activities, ICCAT has special funds for participation in ICCAT meetings and capacity building activities with ICCAT CPCs. All the information related to this subject is published on the ICCAT website (<https://www.iccat.int/en/meetingsFunds.html>). The capacity building activities are often made through workshops, training courses, meetings, and, involve areas such as data collection workflows, biological sampling schemes, species identification, modelling approaches (CPUES standardization, SS3, MSE processes, etc.). The collaborators involved were the Secretariat professional staff, invited experts often associated with ICCAT special programs (GBYP, AOTTP, SMTYP, etc.), and CPC scientists. In addition, the ICCAT Secretariat staff maintains continuous CPC support on various areas of data collection systems.