

ICCAT – MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE FOR THE ATLANTIC BLUEFIN TUNA

Concept and process, May 18th 2021

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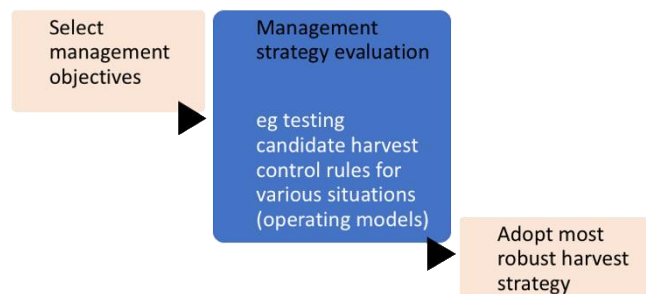
ICCAT’s Commission plans to move to the formal adoption of a harvest strategy for the Atlantic Bluefin tuna (both its western and eastern stocks) at its plenary in 2022. Future Atlantic Bluefin tuna TACs (Total Allowables Catches) would then be set through the application of this pre-agreed rule.

A harvest strategy is an approach to setting catch limits (TAC) or other management measures based on an indicator of stock status. A fully specified harvest strategy includes 1) a monitoring plan, 2) an assessment method for using the monitoring data to determine stock status, and 3) a harvest control rule (HCR) that sets fishing opportunities based on the status determination.

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How a harvest strategy is being developed?

The harvest strategy is being developed through an iterative process involving scientists and managers, with input from stakeholders. ICCAT managers adopted conceptual management objectives (Resolution 18-03) to set their vision for the future of the fishery, and now scientists are using a modelling process called management strategy evaluation (MSE) to test which of a series of candidate management procedures (CMPs) will best achieve those



objectives. Importantly, the MSE accounts for a number of different potential realities for the species (so called operating models), making the process much more robust to uncertainty and natural variability.

The development process is meant to be a transparent and inclusive process where **managers** have the first (selecting management objectives) and last (selecting the management procedure) say, with stakeholder input as a guiding force. For example, stakeholders may have opinions on management objectives related to maximizing catches, stability in landings from year to year, and/or maintaining the stock at a certain abundance level.

What has been the progress to date?

The bluefin MSE has been in progress since 2014. The modelling framework is now complete, and the MSE is currently being reconditioned based on the most recent data and indices of abundance. The updated MSE will be presented at the next intersessional meeting (5-10 July, BFT MSE Technical Group of ICCAT). Six CMPs are being developed by various teams (including one from the EU) and should be refined during this meeting based on the reconditioned model.

What are the next steps?

From the 6 existing CMPs, the highest performing will be presented to the Commission (Panel 2) in November for feedback. The 12 November dialogue meeting (SCRS-Panel 2) will update the Commission on the MSE process, clarify the inherent management tradeoffs, and gauge the acceptability of the candidate management procedures with recommendations for their future refinement.

The performance of the different CMPs will be evaluated relative to the fishery's management objectives. This year's chief task for the Commission is to finalize those objectives for the fish and fisheries by filling in the blanks of Res. 18-03 to add probabilities and timelines. (cf [Resolution 18-03](#): conceptual management objectives)

Next year will include a series of intersessional dialogue meetings to finalize the MSE with Commission input. The goal is to adopt the MP at the 2022 Annual meeting to set the TAC for 2023 and beyond.

References and sources :

ICCAT :

[Management Strategy Evaluation](#)

[Additional workplan details presented at March 2021 P2 meeting](#)

[Resolution 18-03](#): conceptual management objectives

Future meetings :

- 5-10 July: BFT MSE Technical Group
- 2-9 September: 2nd Intersessional Meeting of the SCRS Bluefin Tuna Species Group
- 20-25 September: SCRS Species Group meeting, will likely be at least 1 day on bluefin
- 27 September – 2 October: ICCAT SCRS Plenary, will likely include update on bluefin MSE
- 12 November: ICCAT BFT MSE meeting
- 15-22 November: ICCAT Annual Meeting

ICES :

[WORKSHOP ON GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATIONS \(WKG MSE2\)](#)

Outreach materials by The Pew Charitable Trusts

- [Harvest Strategies: 21st Century Fisheries Management](#)
- Video: [Brian Jeffriess, CEO of Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association, on Harvest Strategies](#)
- Video: [Scientist Doug Butterworth on the Benefits of Harvest Strategies](#)

And also other materials available on <https://harveststrategies.org>