



The Pew/IDDRI Atlantic Tuna Seminar Bulletin

A Summary Report of the Seminar on “What is the Future of Bluefin Tuna? Perspectives before ICCAT”

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THE PEW/IDDRI ATLANTIC TUNA SEMINAR BULLETIN: 16 NOVEMBER 2010

The seminar entitled “What is the Future of Bluefin Tuna? Perspectives before the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)” took place on 16 November at the Oceanographic Institute in Paris, France. The meeting immediately preceded the 17th Special Meeting of ICCAT (ICCAT 2010), and was attended by over 200 participants representing intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, academia and representatives of the media.

The seminar considered the future for bluefin tuna; two different views on a proposal to address this issue under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); and perspectives before ICCAT. The event was an initiative of the Pew Environment Group and the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI-Sciences Po). Hosted by the Oceanographic Institute, the seminar consisted of presentations by expert panelists, followed by an interactive audience discussion and a reception.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL ACTION ON ATLANTIC TUNA

Atlantic bluefin tuna populations in both the eastern and western Atlantic Ocean are currently at very low levels. The following brief history provides information on relevant institutions and measures taken.

IUCN: At its meeting from 5-14 October 2008, the IUCN World Conservation Congress adopted a resolution asking ICCAT, at its next meeting of November 2008, to establish a science-based recovery plan according to advice from the ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS), including the closure of the fishery during May and June and a Total Allowable Catch of less than 15,000 tonnes.

ICCAT: As the intergovernmental body responsible for the conservation and management of Atlantic tunas, ICCAT currently manages Atlantic bluefin tuna as two stocks, the western and the eastern stocks, with the boundary between the two spatial units being the 45°W meridian. In 1992 ICCAT first adopted a recommendation requiring trade tracking and reporting, and in 2007 ICCAT adopted the Bluefin Tuna Catch Documentation Programme. The Programme entered into force in June 2008, and requires the documentation of trade information, as well as catch, transfer, transshipment and farming information.

At ICCAT 2008 in Marrakesh, Morocco, ICCAT agreed to Total Allowable Catches (TACs) for the East Atlantic and Mediterranean stock that decline annually: 22,000 tonnes, 19,950 tonnes, and 18,500 tonnes for the years 2009, 2010, and 2011 respectively.

At ICCAT 2009, decisions were made to set the TAC for the Eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna stock at 13,500 tonnes, and to implement a rebuilding plan.

CITES COP 15: The Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to CITES convened from 13-25 March 2010, in Doha, Qatar. At the meeting, Atlantic bluefin tuna was proposed for inclusion in Appendix I, due to the status of the stock and the role of international trade in driving the decline of the species. The required two-thirds of CITES parties did not agree to include Atlantic bluefin tuna in Appendix I. At the meeting Japan, the European Union, the US, and others made public commitments to take strong, meaningful action at the November 2010 ICCAT Special Meeting.

REPORT OF THE SEMINAR

Lucien Chabason, Senior Advisor, IDDRI-Sciences Po, facilitated the seminar. Noting the need to take stock of the situation of bluefin tuna prior to the ICCAT Special Meeting, he explained that IDDRI-Sciences Po is a think-tank and that the seminar aimed to provide a space for exchange and thought.

In his welcoming address, his Excellency Bernard Fautrier, Chief Executive Officer, Foundation Prince Albert II of Monaco, outlined his organization’s work in supporting 130 partnership projects on water resources, biodiversity and climate change. He outlined public awareness activities undertaken in Monaco, stressed that governmental and non-governmental action is complementary, and said the seminar represented an opportunity for those committed to the cause of bluefin tuna conservation to exchange ideas.

Participants then heard a special video message from Prince Albert II of Monaco. In his address, Prince Albert underscored the need for complex and lasting efforts, including sanctuaries for bluefin tuna, as well as to reconsider economic choices and consumption habits.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR BLUEFIN TUNA?: Gerald Scott, Chair of ICCAT SCRS, outlined results of SCRS’s recent analysis of bluefin tuna stocks. He noted that in the east Atlantic declining mortality rates were found in older fish, but results were unclear in younger fish. He said spawning stock biomass tendency was stabilizing in some outcomes and declining in others. In the west Atlantic, Scott said slow progress towards rebuilding stocks had been observed, but that the mortality of spawners was found to be decreasing, and recruitment



increasing. On the outlook for both stocks, he explained SCRS estimates that east Atlantic bluefin tuna have a 60% chance of rebuilding by 2022, and that west Atlantic bluefin tuna have a 50% chance of rebuilding by 2019. Scott also highlighted that increased information has led to a broader range of uncertainty about bluefin stock status.

Roberto Mielgo Bregazzi, Director, Advanced Tuna Ranching Technologies, stressed that bluefin tuna stocks are collapsing, said “ecocide” had taken over the debate, and asserted that the latest SCRS report was a “monument dedicated to voodoo science.” On the 60% probability of recovering stocks by 2022, he called for a more ambitious goal. Citing the SCRS recommendation of TAC from 0 to 13,500 tonnes for 2011-2013, Bregazzi said a zero tonne TAC is the only option, and this would be consistent with the European Union’s legal obligations.

TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS ON CITES: Sue Lieberman, Director of International Policy, Pew Environment Group, presented an overview of the consideration of bluefin tuna under CITES. She stated that at CITES COP 15, parties found that the species qualified for Appendix 1 listing, but that they voted not to include it. Lieberman noted that several countries said that if ICCAT doesn’t take strong action, then another proposal would be made to CITES at its next COP. She clarified claims of conflict between CITES and ICCAT, explaining the two are complementary, with CITES regulating international trade and ICCAT managing the fishery. Lieberman highlighted that the burden of proof is now on ICCAT “to show the world what decisions they can take.”

Serge Beslier, Honorary Director, European Commission, speaking in his personal capacity, noted the results of an independent report which concluded that over-fishing occurred because of ICCAT’s decisions, specifically because contracting parties decided not to take into account SCRS opinions. He described current oceans governance as fragmented, but said the problem lies not with lack of coordination between international regimes, but with inconsistency within states. Beslier lamented that some states take different positions in ICCAT and in CITES.

PERSPECTIVES BEFORE ICCAT: ICCAT Chair Fabio Hazin, speaking in his personal capacity and without mandate from ICCAT’s contracting parties, acknowledged that in the past ICCAT has not paid due attention to SCRS scientific advice, but that this was “no longer an option.” Hazin stressed that while not perfect, ICCAT is strong on science. He underscored the need for ICCAT to improve monitoring and control, and stressed the importance of moving to an integrated electronic tagging and tracking system. Acknowledging that electronic tagging is not a panacea, Hazin said such an approach would help to attain a more accurate figure on total catch. He also highlighted the need to improve compliance.

Yves Miserey, journalist and co-author of the book “Une Mer Sans Poissons”, said the problems with bluefin tuna were similar to those of cod and herring. Reflecting on 14th Century fishing practices in the Netherlands where fishermen believed the seas’ resources were infinite, Miserey lamented that the same attitudes prevailed today. He went on to outline several wars that have been triggered or exacerbated over access to cod and herring.

He questioned ICCAT’s reporting practices, deeming the reports inaccessible to the general public, and suggested that media observers be allowed access to ICCAT meetings.

Isabelle Autissier, Chair of the Board, WWF France, said bluefin fishing represented an uncontrollable, opaque system. Citing recent SCRS reports, she said the uncertainty and inaccuracy described in these reports were a clear indication of this problem. Autissier said the ICCAT fish documentation system has failed, and suggested that France’s position on bluefin tuna fishing is counter to the precautionary principle. Autissier said bluefin tuna fishing does not create jobs in France and that the issue of employment is being used inappropriately. She noted Libya’s request for a two-year moratorium on bluefin tuna fishing, as well as Japan’s activities to reduce imports, and concluded that “what we do to the sea, we do to ourselves.”

Rémi Parmentier, Senior Policy Advisor, the Pew Environment Group, explained that the EU is one of the largest fish markets, and has one of the largest exclusive economic zones. He stressed that Europe needed to be aware of the global impact of its attitude towards marine biodiversity, stating that the EU’s fishing footprint is considerable, and comparable to the environmental footprint of the US on climate change. Parmentier highlighted that in 30 years, Western Atlantic bluefin tuna stocks had not recovered and said real measures were needed immediately on both sides of the Atlantic. He said the issue should not be framed as environmentalists versus fishermen, because fishermen are the first victims of fisheries collapse. Stressing the need to act in accordance with the precautionary principle enshrined in European treaties and the French Constitution, he urged ICCAT to “stop sailing in the fog.” Parmentier underscored that ICCAT must suspend fishing for bluefin tuna until stocks start to recover and necessary controls are put in place.

AUDIENCE DISCUSSION: In the ensuing discussion, audience members directed questions to panelists. In response to a question on pilot electronic tagging activities, Scott explained that some pilot activities have been conducted in Japan, and Hazin highlighted the importance of such activities to improve bluefin tuna fisheries management. Regarding a question on why ICCAT had historically ignored its scientists’ advice, Hazin stated that “those days are over.”

In response to a question on the necessity of listing bluefin tuna under CITES when the stock status between 2008 and 2010 indicated a larger biomass, Scott confirmed that the biomass was either unchanged or increasing, but that the data sets are always 1-2 years behind.

Regarding a question on reports that France will support a TAC of 13,500 tonnes, Bregazzi underscored that such a decision would not be in line with European law, as there is sufficient evidence that the Bluefin Catch Documentation (BCD) database is not working. In response to media discussion on a proposal that a TAC of 6,000 tonnes may be allowed for small-scale artisanal fishermen, Parmentier stressed the need to suspend bluefin tuna fishing until the BCD is fully developed and abuses can be clearly identified. He said that his preference was to focus this week at ICCAT on possible synergies, as opposed to possible differences, between artisanal fishermen and environmental NGOs.