

Annual Review of National SBT Fisheries

European Union

2010

(September 2011)

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Union is committed to RFMOs objectives and the key role they play in the long term conservation and sustainable use of stocks. The European Union remains dedicated to fulfilling its obligations towards CCSBT and to actively contributing to the conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna.

The European Union is a Contracting Party to all RFMOs whose areas overlap or are adjacent to the CCSBT Convention area (ICCAT, IOTC, WCPFC and CCAMLR) and complies with all the conservation and management measures applicable in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

The Southern Bluefin Tuna fishery of the European Union vessels is of special character as it is not a targeted fishery, but constitutes a minor, unavoidable by-catch during fishing activities for swordfish and shark.

2. OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS ON EFFORT

• Catch reporting

The system that applies to the EU swordfish vessels, which are those which might have incidental catches of SBT, is as follows. In the Atlantic, the EU has a quota allocated by ICCAT. This is allocated to Member States who in turn allocate to their vessels. These vessels are obliged to maintain a daily logbook of all catches and must have an operational VMS. They report on a monthly basis their preliminary swordfish catches, however, by-catches are currently reported with less frequency. The logbooks are then compiled for the different oceans for both the directed catch species (swordfish and shark) and for by-catch, such as SBT. Coupled with the scientific data on, notably, line sets/hooks, length and sex of fish, our data were normally finalised by September of the year following the year of fishery. However, following better coordination and compliance from Member States, this year the data were made available on 1st June. These data are submitted to the RFMOs – ICCAT, IOTC, WCPFC, and CCSBT, in time for their Scientific Committee Meetings and the Compliance Committees, where relevant.

Improvements are being studied in order to comply with CCSBT requirement to supply monthly data. To this extent, discussions are undergoing with relevant Member States. However, given the very small amount of EU SBT catches, the Extended Commission might give consideration to less frequent reporting.

• Authorised Vessels List

All vessels present in the area are included on the Authorised Vessels list. The Union has provided an update to the Authorised Vessels List on 28 July 2009, in accordance with Article 4 of the Resolution on amendment of the Resolution on “Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Fishing (IUU) and Establishment of a CCSBT Record of Vessels over 24 meters Authorized to Fish for Southern Bluefin Tuna” adopted at the CCSBT 15 in 2008. No changes were registered since then. The EU will inform the Secretariat of any further changes.

- **Reporting of quota allocations and catch by company, quota holder or vessel**

Given that the Union catches of SBT constitute by-catch, there is no quota allocation. *Council Regulation (EU) No 57/2011 of 18 January 2011, fixing for 2011 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks, applicable in EU waters and, for EU vessels, in certain non-EU waters* is the legislation establishing the ceiling of 10 tons annual catches and prohibiting any targeted fishing of SBT.

- **Controls**

All EU fishing vessels over 15m are equipped with the Vessels Monitoring System, in accordance with the EU Regulation 2244/2003.

In 2008 the Union adopted a regulation on Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Fishing (EU Regulation 1005/2008) which has entered into force on 1st January 2010.

Furthermore, EU Regulation 1224/2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy also entered into force on 1st January 2010. This Regulation thoroughly modernised the EU's approach to fisheries control. In particular, it brings the system in line with the strong measures which the EU had adopted in 2008 to combat illegal fishing in the high seas (see above). In particular, the Regulation introduces stricter provisions in terms of Port State Measures, of data transmission, the control and management of fleet capacity and the control of fishing gear. Additionally, market measures are adopted, such as traceability, so to track the provenance of the products. The same Regulation also gives the right to the European Commission to close a specific fishery when a specific stock is threatened.

3. CATCH AND EFFORT

The total catch of SBT in 2010 amounted to 2,88 tonnes taken by Spanish vessels. This constitutes whole weights.

There are no catches from recreational fisheries in the area.

There is no mortality allowance.

The 2010 catches are lower than the allocated quota, and represent a minor unavoidable bycatch (0.0005% of the total catch of Spanish fleet in the area) and resulted from activities of two vessels during longline fisheries for swordfish and shark.

4. HISTORICAL CATCH AND EFFORT

The historical catches of SBT by EU vessels have been relatively limited and amounted to 3.5 tonnes in 2003, 1 tonne in 2004, 2.6 tonnes in 2005, 3.4 tonnes in 2006, 18.1 tonnes in 2007, 14.3 tonnes in 2008 and 1,68 tonnes in 2009.

5. ANNUAL FLEET SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION

Not applicable

6. HISTORICAL FLEET SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION

Not applicable

7. FISHERIES MONITORING

The Spanish vessels benefit from partial coverage of scientific observers on board.

8. OTHER FACTORS

- **Import/export statistics**

The small amount of EU SBT catches is normally landed along with other species of tuna by-catch (*Thunus alalunga*, etc.) and sold fresh on local markets for consumption or sometimes it is also given to charity.

Fish caught in the WCPFC area is landed in Papeete (Tahiti), whereas fish caught in the IOTC area is landed in Durban (Sudafrica).

The amount of imported SBT reported equalled to 9,6 tonnes of fresh SBT imported from Australia.

- **Ecologically Related Species**

The European Union fleet complies with all current binding and recommendatory measures aimed at the protection from fishing of ecologically related species, including seabirds, sea turtles and sharks, which have been adopted by the IOTC, WCPFC and ICCAT when fishing in their respective Convention areas.

In February 2009 the European Commission adopted the first ever EU Action Plan for the Conservation and Management of Sharks. The aim of the plan is to ensure that effective steps are taken to help rebuild shark stocks wherever they are under threat, if necessary on a precautionary basis, and to set down guidelines for the sustainable management of the fisheries concerned, including those where shark are taken as by-catch. The plan also includes measures to

improve scientific knowledge of shark stocks and shark fisheries. The measures set out cover not only sharks, but also related species, such as skates and rays, and will apply wherever the EU fleet operates, both within and outside European waters.

The European Commission is also currently drafting a Union Plan of Action to reduce incidental catches of seabirds in fishing activities. The deadline of the public consultation was set to August 2010. The input received has been analysed and policy options are currently being explored.

The EU strongly supports the improvement of the assessment of existing incidental catches of seabirds in fisheries and intends to examine what measures are required to achieve more reliable reporting of incidental catches of seabirds in European fisheries.