

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND MARKETS

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, LAW OF THE SEA AND REGIONAL FISHERIES ORGANISATIONS

Brussels, 5 October 2010

MARE/B1/MDA/ig D(2010)

EUROPEAN UNION REPORT ON 2009 SBT FISHERY

The European Union is committed to RFMOs and the key role they play in the long term conservation and sustainable use of stocks and, in particular, to the importance of the strengthening and modernising these organisations. The European Union remains dedicated to fulfilling its obligations towards CCSBT and to actively contributing to Southern Bluefin Tuna conservation issues.

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

The SBT 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 fisheries for swordfish and shark.

1. OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINS ON EFFORT**Catch reporting**

The EU catch in 2009 amounted to 1,68 tons of SBT, all taken by Spanish vessels. This final figure represents a lower amount to the one provisionally reported and became available only in late August due to specific nature of longline fisheries for swordfish.

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 date were made available in August. These data are submitted to the RFMOs – ICCAT, IOTC, IATTC, WCPFC, and now

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 and we expect our performance to improve very soon.

The 2009 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.

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 during 2009 and 2010. The EU will inform the Secretariat of any further changes.

Trade

There have been no exports of SBT in 2009 from the European Union. The amount of imported SBT reported equalled to 21,4 tonnes of fresh SBT imported from Australia (11,6t), Tunisia (8,8t) and Morocco (1t).

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.

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 brought the system into 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 strict 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.

2. CATCH AND EFFORT

The total catch of SBT in 2009 amounted to 1,68 tonnes taken by Spanish vessels. This constitutes whole weights.

There are no recreational catches in the area.

There is no mortality allowance.

3. 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 and 14.3 tonnes in 2008.

4. OBSERVER COVERAGE

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

5. 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 in August 2010. The input received is being analysed and the adoption of the Action Plan is envisaged for the first quarter of 2011.

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.