

## **European Union Annual Report to the Ecologically Related Species Working Group (ERSWG) 2013**

### **1. Introduction**

- General comments on fishing methods by which southern bluefin tuna is caught in party fisheries (by fleet, area, and time).

**The EU fleet does not target Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT). The EU catches are extremely limited and the result of unavoidable by-catches during long-line fisheries for swordfish and shark in the IOTC, ICCAT and WCPFC Convention Areas. Vessels from Spain and Portugal are active in the three RFMOs in question and may encounter by-catches of SBT.**

- General comments on type and magnitude of ERS caught by fishery/method.

**The EU fleet's interactions with ecologically related species does not relate to targeted SBT fisheries, but occur when fishing for the species managed by the IOTC, ICCAT or WCPFC. As the EU catches of SBT are extremely limited, the magnitude of ERS caught in the long-line fisheries in question is negligible.**

### **2. Review of SBT Fisheries**

- Fleet size and distribution (brief summary of trends)

**As regards Portuguese vessels, in recent years there is a stable trend, with around 20 vessels in those parts of the IOTC, ICCAT or WCPFC Convention Areas where SBT may be encountered. As regards Spanish vessels the trend in recent years has been between 35 and 46 vessels.**

- Distribution of Catch and Effort (Summary of catch and effort by area and fleet)

**Since 2008 Portugal has not recorded any SBT catches. In recent years Spanish vessels have recorded by-catches of SBT of around 3-4 tonnes per year. The main part of those by-catches was recorded in the IOTC Convention Area.**

### **3. Fisheries Monitoring for Each Fleet**

- Summary of recent observer coverage of SBT fisheries fleets and summary of data collection activities of observers.

**In the CCSBT Scientific Observer Program Standards the coverage of the program is indicated in point 4 as 'the fishing activity of CCSBT members and cooperating non-members where ever southern Bluefin tuna are targeted or are a significant by-catch'. The EU fleet does not target SBT, and the EU considers that a by-catch of approximately 3-4 tonnes of SBT cannot be considered as significant. There is therefore no specific observer programme for the CCSBT area, but EU vessels are required to comply with the observer programmes established by the IOTC, ICCAT and WCPFC. EU long liners active in the three relevant RFMOs have complied with the respective observer programmes and implementing reports and activities have been reported separately to those RFMOs or through the Scientific Committees. In IOTC, ICCAT and WCPFC the minimum observer requirements are fixed at 5%, which in some cases is exceeded by EU vessels.**

- Summary of data collection activities from non observed activities.

**The EU fleet does not target SBT, and data collection from non-observed activities does not take place in relation to by-catches of SBT.**

#### **4. Seabird<sup>1</sup>**

- Summary of cpue and total numbers of seabird incidentally caught by area and fleet

and list of numbers of each seabird species caught reported from observers<sup>2</sup>.

**Since the EU fleet does not target SBT, there are no interactions with ecologically related species related to SBT fisheries.**

- Summary of seabird captures from sources other than observers.

**Idem**

#### **5. Other Non-target Fish<sup>1</sup>**

- Summary of cpue and total numbers of shark and the predominant non-target fish

species by area and fleet reported from observers<sup>2</sup>.

**Idem**

- Summary of non-target fish captures from sources other than observers.

**Idem**

#### **6. Marine Mammal and Marine Reptile<sup>1</sup>**

- Summary of total numbers of marine mammal and marine reptile incidentally caught reported from observers<sup>2</sup>.

**Idem**

- Summary of marine mammal and marine reptile captures from sources other than observers.

**Idem**

#### **7. Mitigation Measures to Minimise Seabird and Other Species Bycatch**

**Current Measures**

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<sup>1</sup> This information should also be provided by species (including the scientific name) wherever possible.

<sup>2</sup> ERSWG9 recommended that Members and cooperating non-members should include the information shown in Table 1 of this reporting template in future national reports to the ERSWG.

**The EU fleet complies with all current binding or recommended measures aimed at the protection of ecologically related species, including seabirds, sea turtles and sharks, which have been adopted by the IOTC, ICCAT and WCPFC, when fishing in the respective Convention areas for species managed by these RFMOs.**

- **Mandatory Measures for Each Fleet**

- Description of each measure

- Compliance Monitoring System (i.e. how is compliance measured)

- Level of Compliance for each measure

**Idem**

- **Voluntary Measures for Each Fleet**

- Description of each measure

**Deep-setting line shooter**

**Tori lines**

**Weighted branch lines**

**Blue dyed bait**

**Management of all discharge**

**Logbook for registration of any by-catches of seabirds**

- Proportion of fleet using each measure and how this proportion was determined

**In relation to voluntary measures, the EU fleet's interactions with ecologically related species does not relate to targeted SBT fisheries, but occur when fishing for the species managed by the IOTC, ICCAT or WCPFC.**

**Measures under Development/Testing**

- Description of each measure being developed and tested

**N/A**

- Lead agency undertaking research

**N/A**

- Description of any collaboration

**N/A**

- Results to date

**N/A**

- Planned development/testing for next year

N/A

- Expected completion date and report to ERSWG

N/A

## **8. Public Relations and Education Activities**

### *Public Relations Activities*

- media releases
- information booklets, posters, other written material
- video
- public presentations
- trade shows
- forums, conference
- school/university group

### *Education*

- crew training, especially ship masters
- trainee fishers
- engineers
- managers
- observers

### *Information Exchange*

- research

**See information under point 11 below, concerning a report on the provision of scientific advice for the purpose of the implementation of the EU Plan of Action on sharks.**

**Furthermore, with funding from among other the 7<sup>th</sup> European Framework Programme for Research, the MADE project, a European research project, aimed at proposing measures to mitigate impacts of fisheries targeting large pelagic fish in the open ocean. Focusing on tropical tuna purse seiners using fish aggregating devices and pelagic long liners, the goal was to develop**

appropriate knowledge on the behavioural ecology of species as well as on the fisheries themselves<sup>3</sup>.

- educational materials
- other regional fisheries organisations

All relevant information concerning ERS from other RMFOs are at the disposal of ship-owners and ship masters.

- international organisations
- non-member states and entities
- review of new ideas obtained from crew debriefings or ship fishing reports

#### 9. Information on other ERS (non-bycatch) such as prey and predator species

On 6 July 2013, Regulation (EU) No 605/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1185/2003 on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels, entered into force. EU operators are now obliged to land all sharks with their fins attached. The practice of "shark finning" has been prohibited on EU fishing vessels since 2003. However, a derogation allowed special fishing permits to be issued for on-board processing, whereby shark fins could be removed from the carcasses (with the fins and the remainder of the shark being landed together or separately). While the practice of shark finning was forbidden in EU waters and on EU vessels, the fact that on-board processing was still possible, cast doubts on the effectiveness of controls, which rely on carcass-to-fin weight ratios, and hindered improved landing statistics, the latter being necessary to allow for science-based management of shark species.

#### 10. Others

- Information obtained concerning ERS related fishing activities of non-party fleets.

N/A

#### 11. Implementation of the IPOA-Seabirds and IPOA-Sharks

- A description of activities undertaken for the implementation of NPOAs as they

relate to SBT fisheries. The emphasis should be on updates and recent activities.

##### Seabirds

On 16 November 2012, the European Commission adopted an EU Plan of Action (EU-PoA) for reducing incidental catches of seabirds in fishing gears<sup>4</sup>.

The Action Plan in this Communication (EU-PoA) seeks to provide a management framework to minimise seabird bycatch to as low levels as are practically possible. This is in line with the objectives of the reformed EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) of moving towards ecosystem

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.made-project.eu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=1](http://www.made-project.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=1)

<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing\\_rules/seabirds/seabirds\\_communication\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing_rules/seabirds/seabirds_communication_en.pdf)

management covering all components of the ecosystem including seabirds. It is also consistent with the framework of an International Plan of Action (IPOA) for Reducing the Incidental Catches of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries adopted in 1999 by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and follows FAO Best Practice Technical Guidelines drawn up in 2008.

The plan's 30 recommended actions are a combination of binding and non-binding measures. Specific short-term actions include:

- more rapid implementation of fisheries management measures to protect seabirds within Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Birds Directive;
- undertaking more extensive monitoring of fisheries where information on seabird bycatch is lacking or uncertain;
- implementing proven mitigation measures (such as the use of bird-scaring lines and acoustic deterrents or the use of weighted lines) in long line fisheries in EU and non-EU waters where bycatch is highest;
- instigating research into the development of practical and efficient mitigation measures particularly in static net fisheries.

In the longer-term, the goal is to incorporate the mitigation and monitoring elements into the new frameworks for technical measures and data collection being developed in the context of the reformed EU Common Fisheries Policy and provide necessary funding to support this under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

#### Sharks

The conservation of sharks and rays is addressed within the framework of the EU Plan of Action (EUPOA) adopted by the European Commission in February 2009<sup>5</sup>. The scope of the European Union Plan of Action for Sharks covers directed commercial, by-catch commercial, directed recreational, and by-catch recreational fishing of any chondrichthyans within European Union waters. It also includes any fisheries covered by current and potential agreements and partnerships between the European Union and third countries, as well as fisheries in the high seas and fisheries covered by RFMOs managing or issuing non-binding recommendations outside European Union waters. The EUPOA identifies the measures deemed necessary both at EU level (TACs, technical measures, effort and capacity limits) and under international management regimes (measures taken in the framework of RFMOs, CITES, CMS and the Barcelona Convention). A wide range of measures for shark management were already in place in the EU before the adoption of the EUPOA and the implementation of the EUPOA is progressing well.

Following the adoption of the EUPOA the EU has actively participated to the negotiations of an instrument on the conservation of migratory sharks under the aegis of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), which led to the adoption in February 2010 of a Memorandum of Understanding on the conservation of migratory sharks. The EU signed the Sharks MoU in November 2011 and participated actively in the first meeting of signatories, which took place in Bonn, Germany, on 24 – 27 September 2012. It also presented a proposal at CITES CoP 16, which took place in Bangkok on 3 – 15 March 2013, to list porbeagle in Appendix II of CITES.

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<sup>5</sup> COM(2009)40final. 05.02.2009.

In the EUPOA, the EU emphasizes the need to support the work of the RFMOs and strengthen the RFMOs that are in place. These orientations are confirmed by the European Commission Communication on the External Dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy<sup>6</sup>.

**On 16 July 2013, the European Commission published a report on the provision of scientific advice for the purpose of the further implementation of the EUPOA on sharks<sup>7</sup>.** The objective of the project behind the report was to obtain scientific advice for the purpose of implementing the EUPOA on sharks as regards the facilitation of monitoring fisheries and shark stock assessment on a species-specific level in the high seas. The study focused on major elasmobranch species caught by both artisanal and industrial large pelagic fisheries on the High Seas of the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific area, which are currently monitored and potentially managed by respective Tuna RFMOs. Specifically, firstly the study aims to collate and estimate historical fisheries data especially on species composition of catches, catches and effort, size frequencies in order to identify the gaps in the current availability of fishery statistics as well current knowledge biology and ecology of sharks that should be filled in order to support the scientific advice provided to RFMOs on sustainable management of elasmobranch fisheries. Secondly, the project behind the report aimed to review and prioritise the gaps identified to develop a research program to fill those gaps in support for the formulation of scientific advice for management of sharks.

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<sup>6</sup> COM(2011)424 final. 13.07.211.

<sup>7</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/studies/sharks/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/studies/sharks/index_en.htm)