

Report of 2008 SBT Fishery - European Community

The European Community 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 Community remains dedicated to fulfilling our obligations towards CCSBT and to actively contributing to Southern Bluefin Tuna conservation issues.

The European Community is a Contracting Party to all RFMOs with areas overlapping or adjacent to the CCSBT Convention area (ICCAT, IOTC, WCPFC and CCAMLR as well as a Cooperating Non-Party to IATTC) and fulfills all the conservation and management measures applicable in the areas of jurisdiction of those RFMOs.

The SBT fishery of the European Community 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 EC catch in 2008 amounted to 14.3 tonnes of SBT, all taken by Spanish vessels. This final figure represents a higher amount to the one reported previously and became available only in late September due to specific nature of longline fisheries for swordfish.

The system that applies to the EC swordfish vessels, which are those which might have incidental catches of SBT, is as follows. In the Atlantic, the EC has a quota allocated by ICCAT. This is allocated to Member States who in turn allocate to their vessels. These vessels report on a three monthly basis their preliminary swordfish catches and, of course, must maintain a daily logbook of all catches and have operational VMS. These 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 are normally finalised by September of the year following the year of fishery. 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.

This level of catches is higher than the allocated quota, yet it represents a minor unavoidable bycatch (0.05% of the total catch of Spanish fleet in the area) and resulted from activities of 5 vessels during longline fisheries for swordfish and shark.

The current reporting of catches of Southern Bluefin Tuna occurs on a quarterly basis. Given the limited number of catches, the Community has for the past year maintained the status quo, however we are aiming at compliance with monthly catch reporting as soon as possible.

In this respect, however, it is necessary to note that the data provided on a quarterly basis is preliminary and becomes rectified only in the year following the fishery on the basis of scientific data and observations.

Authorised Vessels List

All vessels present in the area are included on the Authorised Vessels list. The Community 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. The EC will inform the Secretariat of any further changes.

Trade

There have been no exports of SBT in 2008 from the European Community. The amount of imported SBT reported equaled to 195.1 kg of fresh SBT imported from the Netherlands to Australia in the 4th quarter of 2008 and 66.8 kg of fresh SBT, imported to the Netherlands from Australia in the first quarter of 2009. The Community has provided the CCSBT Secretariat with Trade Information Scheme documents for these imports.

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

Given that the Community catches of SBT constitute by-catch, there is no quota allocation.

Controls

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

As you are aware, last year the Community adopted a regulation on Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Fishing (EC Regulation 1005/2008) which is due to enter into force on 1 January 2010.

The Community is currently preparing a transposition of the Catch Documentation Scheme into the Community law. We expect the Member States to fully comply with this Resolution as of 1 January 2010.

2. Catch and Effort

The total catch of SBT in 2008 amounted to 14.3 tonnes taken by Spanish vessels. This constitutes whole weights. This amount was taken by 5 vessels.

There are no recreational catches in the area.

There is no mortality allowance.

3. Historical Catch and Effort

The historical catches of SBT by EC vessels have been relatively limited and amounted to 3.5 tonnes in 2003, 1 tonne in 2004, 2.6 tonnes in 2006 and 18.1 tonnes in 2007.

4. Observer coverage:

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

5. Ecologically Related Species

The European Community fleet complies with all current binding and recommendatory measures aimed at the protection of ecologically related species, including seabirds, sea turtles and sharks, from fishing, which have been adopted by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, when fishing in its Convention area for species under this Convention, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission when fishing in its Convention area for species under this Convention, and the International Commission for the Conservation of the Atlantic Tunas when fishing in its Convention area for species under this Convention.

The European Community adopted in February 2009 Action Plan for the Conservation and Management of Sharks Seabird mitigation. The European Community is currently preparing an international plan of action on seabirds.

The European Commission is currently drafting a Community Plan of Action to reduce incidental catches of seabirds in fishing activities, and its adoption is envisaged for the last quarter of 2010.

The EC 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.

October 2009