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Rome, 24th October 2011

RAC MED OPINION ON BLUEFIN TUNA

The Executive Committee of RAC MED, which met on 20th October 2011, adopted the opinion* of the Working Group on bluefin tuna, held in Malta on 21th September, to analyse the status of the stocks on the basis of scientific data available from the 2011 survey and to formulate a position for the future survey of bluefin tuna, considering that the annual ICCAT meeting in Istanbul is imminent.

Considering

That RAC MED had already produced an opinion in 2010 (prot. 164/AV);

Hopes

That there will be coordination between the three independent marking systems presented in the course of the Working Group (GBYP-ICCAT; WWF “The Med Trail Tuna project”; APCCR) in order to obtain as much information as possible on the migration of tuna;

Gives emphasis to

The considerations already expressed in the 2010 opinion, in particular the need to take into due account the initial results of the ICCAT research programme for bluefin tuna in the Atlantic (GBYP), which will gather data on fishing activities targeting bluefin tuna and will improve statistic data on this species. Such results are demonstrating that some indexes are beginning to rise thus giving an indication of progressive recovery of stocks. These same results are confirmed by various professional representatives, present during the Working Group, who operate in different areas of the Mediterranean basin and declare that stock levels are improving;

Requests

- That the purse seine fishing season be postponed from 1st to 30th June in order to improve the sustainability of the stocks both from a socio-economic and eco systemic point of view;
- Further explanation of the fact that the 5 day extension of the 2011 fishing period was not granted, as requested on several sides including RAC MED, even though the quota had not been reached;



- That suitable action is taken to resolve the problem caused by accidental catch of tuna by vessels involved in other fisheries and targeting other species and not bluefin tuna;
- A ban on the sale of bluefin tuna caught in the framework of recreational and competitive fisheries, obliging those involved to put the live specimens back into the sea during sports fisheries events;
- That those live specimens released during recreational and competitive fisheries are not part of the catch quotas established;
- A ban on any kind of commercial activity ensuing from the capture of bluefin tuna in the context of recreational and competitive fisheries;
- That the data collected for statistical purposes by ICCAT on bluefin tuna caught during recreational and competitive fishing activities should be out together in a single category called “rod and reel” so as to harmonise the information that ICCAT receives from contractors;
- That the forthcoming ICCAT annual session takes into consideration the fact that the resource is not in distress when formulating any recommendations or modifying the recommendations currently in force.

**The present document has been adopted by the working group members with the abstention of KGZS, as Slovenia doesn't have any quota and CEPESCA. WWF and Oceana voted against.*

