

Mediterranean bluefin tuna TAC raised by 60pc this year

The TAC for bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean has been raised by 60 per cent this year, to reach 11,203 tonnes.

The season runs from May 26 to June 24 in the Mediterranean and the Eastern Atlantic, allowing large purse seiner vessels to fish the species up to a pre-determined limit.

This is part of a recovery plan agreed at international level to bring the Bluefin tuna stock back to sustainable levels.

The Bluefin tuna fishery is regulated by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), of which the EU and its Member States are members.

Following advice from ICCAT scientists in 2014, ICCAT agreed to an increase of 60 per cent of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) over three years (2015, 2016 and 2017).

The quota is shared between the 8 EU countries actively involved in the fishery: Spain, France, Italy, Croatia, Greece, Portugal, Malta, and Cyprus, with Spain and France having the largest shares.

A strict control and inspection programme is in place: it sets concrete control priorities and benchmarks and deploys a significant number of inspectors, patrol vessels and aircrafts, all coordinated by the European Fisheries Control Agency and the Member States concerned.

The European Commission is pleased with the work and commitment of the Member states to ensure compliance with the rules in this fishery in the past few years, and is also appreciative of the significant role played by the Agency in ensuring the coordination of these controls.

They will, however, remain vigilant to ensure that all rules, and particularly the individual vessels' quotas, are fully respected and will continue to monitor catches and analyse Vessel Monitoring System data (a satellite-based control system) on a constant basis, as well as continue to send out inspectors.

For the first time in 2016, the EU is also implementing the eBCD, a new state-of-the-art electronic catch document system which greatly improves the traceability of all bluefin products.

The use of this programme, combined with the rest of the measures of the recovery plan, makes this fishery one of the most controlled in the world, and provides the best guarantees to consumers that the resource is being used sustainably.

Bluefin tuna is indeed a primary example of sustainable management, having gone from heavy over-exploitation to full recovery in the space of a few years thanks to a massive international effort led by the EU.

To this date it is the only stock in good state in the Mediterranean, while a great majority of stocks remain overfished.

Convinced that the same kind of collaborative effort should be extended to the other iconic species of the basin, EU Commissioner Karmenu Vella has launched MedFish4ever, a new international campaign for the recovery of all Mediterranean stocks.

He has been gaining alliances with several of the basin's third countries to make sure we proceed cohesively and systematically.

Finally, the European Commission is pleased with the recent political agreement found with the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union to transpose the ICCAT Bluefin tuna recovery plan into European law.

By bringing about additional legal certainty and smoothing the implementation of the various measures of the recovery plan, this can only support the stock's recovery plan and its long-term sustainability.

Source : <http://fis.com/fis/worldnews/worldnews.asp?l=e&ndb=1&id=84655>