



## Update on The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas' Views on Implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management

ICCAT's experience in the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management is as follows:

- a) ICCAT's experience in assessing the impacts of fishing on the ecosystem is primarily through the assessment and management of the main target species. The assessment of target and bycatch species is conducted by science working groups dedicated to this purpose. There are several. These include sharks, Atlantic bluefin tuna, billfish, small tunas, swordfish, albacore, and tropical tunas. In addition to these assessments supporting the maintenance of these stock at levels at or above those that support Maximum Sustained Yield, some assessments integrated environmental variability into the advice or are exploring the use of this environmental variability. Supporting the mandate to assess impacts of fishing is a complex system for data reporting, data management, research programs, stock assessment, and decision making.

In addition to assessing the impact of fishing on target species, ICCAT has a Sub-committee on ecosystems and bycatch. This Sub-committee addresses broader ecosystem considerations such as sea turtle and seabird bycatch, as well as studies and measures to mitigate bycatch and its effects on species impacted by ICCAT fisheries. It has initiated impact evaluations of seabirds, sea turtle and bycatch shark species at several scientific meetings. Finally, the Sub-committee on Ecosystems is developing an Ecosystem Report Card for ICCAT, including the development of status indicators, pressure indicators and reference levels.

- b) In 2019, the ICCAT Convention text was amended to capture a broader mandate than had been previously considered. Specifically [Article IX](#), 1(a) states that (a) The Commission may, on the basis of scientific evidence, make recommendations designed to: (i) ensure in the Convention area the long-term conservation and sustainable use of ICCAT species by maintaining or restoring the abundance of those species at or above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield; (ii) promote, where necessary, the conservation of other species that are dependent on or associated with ICCAT species, with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened".

It is important to note that ICCAT's experience in implementing elements of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management is older than the recent date the convention text was amended. In practice ICCAT has been addressing concerns related to non-target species for some time. In 2015, ICCAT's Recommendation [15-11](#) states that when making recommendations pursuant to Article VIII of the Convention, the Commission should apply an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management. Moreover, ICCAT currently has 20 [active recommendations](#) addressing bycatch species. These first became implemented as early 1995 to address shark bycatch (see [link](#)), 2007 [for birds](#), and 2010 [for sea turtles](#).

- c) ICCAT contracting parties take into consideration socio-economic aspects within their discussions about management measures and allocation decisions plus explicitly in making allocation decisions. For example recommendation [15-13](#), lays forth criteria for this purpose that explicitly consider *inter alia*: the interests of artisanal, subsistence and small-scale coastal fishers; the needs of the coastal fishing communities which are dependent mainly on fishing for the stocks; the needs of the coastal States of the region whose economies are overwhelmingly dependent on the exploitation of living marine resources, including those regulated by ICCAT; the socio-economic contribution of the fisheries for stocks regulated by ICCAT to the developing States, especially small island developing States and developing territories from the region; the respective dependence on the stock(s) of the coastal States, and of the other States that fish species regulated by ICCAT; the economic and/or social importance of the fishery for qualifying participants whose fishing vessels have habitually participated in the fishery in the Convention area; the contribution of the fisheries for the stocks regulated by ICCAT to the national food security/needs, domestic consumption, income resulting



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from exports, and employment of qualifying participants; and the right of qualified participants to engage in fishing on the high seas for the stocks to be allocated.

- d) ICCAT conducts a range of work on biometry, ecology, and oceanography, with a principal focus on the effects of fishing on stock abundance, including stock assessment and Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE), for major stocks. In addition, it does bycatch fisheries monitoring including the management of Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs), live and dead discards.