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JOINT ADVICE MEDAC and SWWAC On Harvest Control Rule Strategy (HCR) of Atlantic and Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna

On 19 July the MEDAC and SWWAC organized a joint workshop on Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Bluefin tuna harvest strategy in view of the ongoing process in ICCAT to adopt harvest control rules for this stock. According to the roadmap agreed in ICCAT, for 2022 there should still be TAC established with a decision from the Commission based on the scientific advice, however starting from 2023 the process will be simplified thanks to the adoption of pre-established HCRs (Harvest Control Rules), that will allow a smoother discussion to set the Total Allowable Catches (TAC) for the stock, as it is already happening in ICCAT for Albacore in the North Atlantic.

The workshop was intended to inform stakeholders about this epochal change for such an important stock and involve them already in the first steps of the decision-making process, providing a space to facilitate the debate and the exchange of views for such a sensitive topic.

Some of the main points that were raised during the debate include:

- The process of adoption of Harvest Strategy needs enough time in order to provide reliable simulations based on the best available science. Acquiring data and improving its quality must be continued and strengthened;
- Bottom-up approach and collaboration of stakeholders should be the basis in defining the future Harvest Control Rules (HCR) taking into account their interests and their experience as well as the typology of the fleet;
- The joint workshop was a first step of stakeholders' involvement and dissemination of information. It is important that consultation continues in collaboration with ICCAT and the EU as a Contracting Party, regularly throughout the process and by organizing as soon as possible informal webinars to collect the opinions from a heterogeneous platform of stakeholders with particular attention to the working languages and the simplification of the scientific information to collect informed feedback;
- Other factors, such as environmental changes, pollution and trophic dynamics, needs to be taken in due account when defining Harvest Strategies.

On the basis of the outcomes of the debate the two ACs are available to provide a space for effective stakeholders' engagement for each step of the process, assuring an



effective sharing of knowledge and their active collaboration in defining and implementing Harvest Control Rules.