



## EU tuna purse seine fleet reaffirms the importance of science-based decisions in RFMOs

Brussels, 29 January 2025

The Europêche Tuna Group<sup>1</sup> organised on January 21<sup>st</sup> in Bermeo its third meeting between industry and science stakeholders at European Level entitled: “*Stock assessments in tuna RFMOs*”.

Scientists from the French *Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD)*, the *Instituto Español de Oceanografía (IEO)* and AZTI, a research institution in Spain and meeting host, brainstormed about how better bridge science with fishers’ reality and align fisheries management with scientific evaluation, including consideration of socio-economic indicators in the decision-making process. Ensuring that management measures are well aligned with scientific evaluations is also a common concern of both scientists and fishers.

During the meeting, scientists also explained the process that led to two major evolutions in tuna RFMOs.

In September 2024, the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) informed that the TAC and catch limits adopted in 2019 for the bigeye tuna had achieved the recommended catch reductions  $z$ , noting that the 72-days FAD closure in the Atlantic was not efficient for bigeye tuna. The SCRS also noted that the yellowfin tuna stock, evaluated in 2014, was healthy, and recommended to maintain catches at around 125 000 metric tons. In the absence of a due allocation to ensure this catch level, the SCRS recommended a one-month full fishery (not only FAD) closure. Many countries, whose fleets operating under other gears than purse seine and would have been affected by such a closure, opposed to follow this recommendation. Instead, the Commission adopted a 45-day closure on FADs for purse seiners only at its annual meeting in Cyprus (November 2024).<sup>2</sup>

In December 2024, the Scientific Committee of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) indicated that Indian Ocean Yellowfin tuna was no longer in the red, its status being changed to green with 88% probability. Indian Ocean Yellowfin Tuna is now evaluated not to be overfished, or subject to overfishing.

Anne-France Mattlet, director of Europêche Tuna Group Director, indicates: “*The Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock’s healthy status is a very good news for the European tropical tuna fleet. The vessels have implemented hard catch reductions since 2016, without any compromise on their commitment to contribute to the IOTC science processes through the reporting of good quality data, including FAD echosounder buoys data which are key to better understand tuna stocks.*” She adds that

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<sup>1</sup> The Europêche Tuna Group is comprised of the main three tuna freezer purse-seine organisations in Europe, namely OPAGAC-AGAC, ANABAC and ORTHONGEL

<sup>2</sup> See Europêche press release : [ICCAT FAD Moratorium reduced in the Atlantic, tuna industry will now try to recover from economic impact](#)

the whole Européche Tuna Group *“hopes that the IOTC will endorse the new results, adopting for this stock a management plan, rather than a recovery plan, at its 2025 Session”*.

Xavier Leduc, President of Européche Tuna Group, underscores the value of such gatherings: *“Through constructive dialogue and the transparent exchange of perspectives, scientists and representatives of the purse-seine industry have established a strong foundation of mutual understanding. These sector-science exchanges are a key step toward promoting the European responsible fishing model while, at the same time, calling for an equal regulatory treatment of all fleets.”*

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