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FOR CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF TUNAS

ICCAT Meeting in Tokyo

The time to act is now!

- Meeting of Managers and Stakeholders in East Atlantic Bluefin Tuna adopts the Joint Statement-

About 150 representatives from 13 countries and territory, including Japan, the European Community, Turkey, the United States, the Republic of Korea and Chinese Taipei, participated in the meeting of managers and stakeholders in East Atlantic Bluefin tuna of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) held in Tokyo March 26-27.

The meeting closed by adopting a joint statement.

ICCAT is forum for governmental consultation among member countries, but this meeting provided the first occasion for fishers, traders, distributors and other stakeholders to gather to discuss various issues now facing the Commission.

In a sense, this reflects the serious situation of the Atlantic bluefin resource management issue to the extent that all the stakeholders have to come together to discuss the issue. This meeting, held before the start of the tuna fishing season in the Mediterranean (later in April), is said to respond to rising questions on ICCAT's resource management capabilities, and served the purpose of regaining its credibility.

In what follows, some of the efforts of ICCAT toward the solution of the issues are presented, highlighting some important points raised at the meeting.

1. Importance of the meeting.

— Opening address by Mr. Fabio Hazin, Commission Chairman

At the opening of the meeting, Chairman Hazin, stated eloquently and straightforwardly the fact that ICCAT is facing a critical situation,



and called on the participants to fulfill their responsibility in the recovery of East Atlantic bluefin tuna. This was a prominent speech appealing to the mind of the audience — one that will possibly be remembered in the history of ICCAT.

(Excerpts)

“The stock of bluefin tuna has been so heavily overfished in recent times that its collapse has become a very serious and threatening possibility. Grave concerns are being raised about ICCAT's competence to manage the tuna stocks in the region. The future of the bluefin tuna fishery and, along with it, the future of ICCAT itself, will depend on the decisions we make now. We still can reverse the present situation. We still can show that ICCAT is capable of properly managing the bluefin tuna stock. We must assure that the scientific advice will be strictly observed. If wait until tomorrow, there will be no tomorrow for this fishery. The time to act is now. Let's work together to make sure that the bluefin tuna will become another successful stories of stock recoveries by ICCAT.”

2. What is the current condition of the Atlantic Bluefin tuna resource?

(Presentation by Dr. Gerald Scott, Chairman, Standing Committee on Research & Statistics, ICCAT; Explanations summarized below.

(1) Over 70% of the catch of the Atlantic bluefin tuna are taken in the Mediterranean Sea.

(2) Most of the catch are from tuna farming, but the data regarding catch, efforts, fish size, etc. are extremely poor, and there is extensive under-reporting of harvest levels.

(3) Management of the Atlantic bluefin tuna is carried out separately in the eastern and western areas of the Atlantic, but ongoing research indicates that there is considerable mixing of the east and west stocks.

(4) Therefore, management actions taken in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean are likely to impact recovery in the western Atlantic.

(5) Before the advent of farming, there was some rebuilding of spawning biomass, but spawning biomass has been on a rapid decline heading toward dangerously low levels.

(6) Farming capacity is about 60,000 tons. The number of licensed bluefin tuna fishing vessels in East Atlantic is 1,750, which is three times as much as the overall catch quota. In other words, it represents too much fishing capacity and too much caging capacity.

(Reference:

Annual total allowable catch of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna

Western stock: 2,100 tons 1999-2018

Eastern stock: 29,500 tons in 2007; to be reduced annually to 25,500 tons in 2010.)

Conclusion: Unless we soon reform, Atlantic bluefin tuna appear rapidly headed toward biological bankruptcy.

3. View of a Japanese tuna fisher

While numbers of participants made statements at the meeting, a Japanese tuna longline fisher presented down-to-the-point and specific proposals. (Summarized below)

“ Responding to the International Plan of Action for the management of fishing capacity (IPOA) of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Japan took the initiative among longline fishing nations and reduced the number of its fishing vessels by 132 in 1999, in order to reduce excessive fishing capacity.

It is obvious that tuna farming has the issue of excessive fishing capacity with regard to East Atlantic bluefin tuna stock. Specific measures,

such as reduction of the number of farming cages, should be taken.

Further, it should be clearly stated in the management rules that not only producers but other stakeholders in processing and distribution sectors are required to take responsible actions toward resource management.

It is also important to make clear the position of processors and distributors that they will not buy or deal in illegal tunas caught in excess of the catch quota.”

This view was supported at the meeting, with some participants stating that processors and cold-store firms should also be placed in the ICCAT positive list and controlled accordingly.

4. Result of the meeting : Adoption of the Joint Statement

The entire text of the Joint Statement on the Sustainable Use of the Eastern Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Resource adopted at the meeting is given on next page.

The first two items, as given below, can be assessed highly as the commitment of all the participants to the contribution to the international community. Namely, the managers and stakeholders participating in the Meeting have re-affirmed the need to:

- *fully comply with all the pertinent conservation and management measures adopted by ICCAT, and in particular, the provisions of the Bluefin Tuna Recovery Plan;*

- *prudently manage their fishing/caging/reefer capacity, fishing effort and market imports in such a manner that brings them into line with the decreasing levels of TAC foreseen in the Bluefin tuna Recovery Plan.*

Those who are involved in the bluefin tuna fishing ought to act in accordance with this statement.

In June this year, stock assessment of bluefin tuna will be made by scientists, and the plenary meeting of ICCAT is scheduled in November. At the meeting, the current east Atlantic bluefin tuna stock recovery plan will be reviewed and it is anticipated that more stringent resource management measures will most probably be introduced. In any case, in order to make the discussion at the plenary a meaningful one, it should be demonstrated, at the closing of this season, that the stakeholders coped with this “statement” with sincerity. Otherwise, as it is said, “there is no future for ICCAT.” We truly expect that ICCAT will overcome this difficult situation again, as it did in the past.

Joint Statement on the Sustainable Use of the Eastern Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Resource

The managers and stakeholders (fishing industry representing all gears, farming establishments, buyers and traders) participating in the Meeting of Managers and Stakeholders in Atlantic Bluefin Fishery have re-affirmed, in order to ensure the prompt recovery and sustainable use of the bluefin tuna resource, the need to:

- Fully comply with all the pertinent conservation and management measures adopted by ICCAT, and in particular, the provisions of the Bluefin Tuna Recovery Plan;
- Prudently manage their fishing/caging/reefer capacity, fishing effort and market imports in such a manner that brings them into line with the decreasing levels of TAC foreseen in the Bluefin tuna Recovery Plan;
- Apply the catch documentation scheme for the full 2008 fishing season in order to ensure its uniform introduction and effectiveness as a key element of the Recovery Plan, and noting that market States accord with this approach;
- Encourage CPCs involved in the fisheries and market for bluefin tuna to cooperate in the fight against IUU activities, notably, through regular exchange of information on fishing activities in their areas or in adjacent areas;
- Further encourage CPCs to exchange data on fishing activities in their waters by flag vessels of other CPCs, which are licensed to fish in their waters under private trade arrangements with the authorization by the CPCs concerned and the Commission and/or under joint fishing operations;
- Consider and support the adoption of the necessary conservation and management measures based upon the best available scientific advice in the review of the existing recovery plans scheduled at the next ICCAT meeting;
- Participate actively in data collection so as to contribute to the assessment of stock status, providing the best available scientific advice for the review of the Recovery Plan.

International Tuna Management

Efforts for ensuring sustainable tuna stocks in Western Central Pacific Ocean

-Workshop of stakeholders held in Canberra-

A workshop of stakeholders was convened by Mr. Glenn Hurry, Chairman, Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission in Canberra, Australia during 1-2 April 2008.

It was a forum for members and industry to gain better understanding on the complexity of the two key issues of conservation measures for bigeye and yellowfin tuna and the adoption of compatible measures on the high seas that will be on the agenda for the annual Commission meeting this year.

Although stocks are not yet actually in an overfished state, on the basis of advice provided by the Scientific Committee, yellowfin and bigeye tuna are currently being overfished in the western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO). The cause for the concerns about the status of stocks relates to the catch of juvenile yellowfin and bigeye in the purse seine fishery, from a variety of industrial and small-scale fisheries and in the longline fishery.

Stakeholders representing coastal nations, distant water fishing nations, fishing industries of different fishing gears and distributors had an open discussion.

Commenting on the meeting, Mr. Hurry said, "I was pleased with the outcome of the meeting and thought that the opportunity of having industry at the table contributing directly to discussions helped our thinking about the issues."

"At the end of the day for the fishery to work the stocks must be sustainable and the industry must remain profitable. So the approaches we develop should consider the needs of industry and the market," he added.

Strong sense of crisis voiced at RMFO Chairs' Meeting in San Francisco

A meeting of Chairs of tuna fisheries management organizations (RMFOs) was held for two days in San Francisco from February 5, 2008.

At the meeting, a strong sense of crisis was expressed regarding the difficult situation that the RMFOs have been facing on resource conservation measures for such species as bluefin and bigeye tuna. The meeting agreed that RMFOs should expeditiously take adequate and effective resource management measures.

Mr. Masanori Miyahara of Japan's Fisheries Agency, who chaired the meeting, said: "We can understand that each organization has its own conditions and circumstances. But there is a move in the market to flatly refuse the tunas for which resource management is not appropriately carried out. Considering this situation, we have a very strong sense of crisis over the continuation of the present deadlock facing tuna resource management."

At present, conservation and management measures for East Atlantic bluefin tunas in the Mediterranean have not been observed properly, and consultations on bigeye and yellowfin tunas in the Eastern Pacific have rough going, showing that resource conservation measures by each organization are not being advanced smoothly.

OPRT News

Chinese Taipei scraps additional 23 large scale tuna longline vessels

OPRT sent an investigation team to Chinese Taipei in March to confirm the progress of vessel scrapping. All the 23 vessels for which scrapping were planned were delivered to the Fisheries Agency of Chinese Taipei. Nine of them have been handed over to the Navy to be used as target vessels.

The remaining 14 vessels were deprived of fishing gears. The main engines, supplementary



ships awaiting scrapping at Kaohsiung Port

engines, and freezers were destroyed, and the ships are now anchored at the Kaohsiung Fishing Port waiting for final scrapping. (One of the main engines was contributed to Marine University in Chinese Taipei. The vessels will be scrapped before the end of this year.)

As a result of the scrapping program, the number of distant-water large scale tuna longline fishing vessels in Chinese Taipei will be reduced to 421. It is anticipated that supply of frozen tuna from Chinese Taipei's fishing vessels to the Japanese market -- the de-facto sole market of frozen tunas produced by Chinese Taipei-- will further decrease in the years ahead.

Reference: exports of frozen tuna from Chinese Taipei to Japan:

125,000 tons in 2005

70,000 tons in 2006

54,000 tons in 2007

Topics

U.S. companies show strong interest in super frozen tunas for genuine Sashimi

A research mission on the feasibility of exports of Super Frozen Tuna (SFT) to the United States, consisting of tuna fishing operators in Japan, visited New York and Los Angeles in February 2008.

Super Frozen Tuna is caught in the fishing ground and quickly frozen at -60C on board. This means the freshness of tunas is preserved as freshly caught, and SFT is evaluated highly as high-quality sashimi tuna.

The research mission found that a number of U.S. companies are interested in SFT.

It is estimated that the sashimi tuna market in the U.S. has the scale of 60,000 tons, with fresh tuna and frozen tuna accounting for about 50% each.

Most of frozen tunas distributed in the United States are carbon monoxide treated tuna (see note below), and only a small amount of SFT are used at high-grade restaurants and sushi shops run by the Japanese.

Some U.S. firms said that "time will come for the U.S. to use SFT now that supplies of fresh tunas have hit the ceiling in the market," thus showing high interest in the future use of SFT. (Note: carbon monoxide treated tuna. CO is being used to preserve tuna color and produce a bright red to pink color.)