

The voice of the bluefin - news from WWF Mediterranean on the bluefin tuna fishery in crisis.

EU absent on renewed commitment to sustainable tuna management

Media Release, 3 June 2010

Rome, Italy - WWF applauds Canada, Japan, Korea and the United States for reconfirming their commitment to urgently establishing a science-based recovery and management plan for the overexploited stocks of Atlantic bluefin tuna, in a statement issued this week - but the global conservation organization is surprised at the absence of the European Union, whose fleets catch most of the fish, in backing the statement.

Released at an informal meeting this week of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) in Barcelona, Spain - where countries met to "confirm their commitment to stock recovery and sustainable management" of the species - the statement reiterates commitments made in March in Doha at a meeting of the largest international wildlife trade convention, CITES.

"WWF congratulates Canada, Japan, Korea and the United States for this loud and clear statement but is alarmed to see that the EU is not among those endorsing the need for sustainable tuna management, especially after being a driving force behind the Doha commitments. Now more than ever, at a time when EU fisheries policy as a whole is supposedly being entirely reformed towards greater sustainability, EU backing is crucial" said Dr Sergi Tudela, Head of Fisheries at WWF.

The statement underlines the need to push for "a comprehensive set of measures for recovery", "accurate reporting", restricted fishing capacity, eliminating illegal trade, punitive action in cases of non-compliance with rules, and "monitoring, control and enforcement measures" at the next annual meeting of all ICCAT parties in November in Paris, France.

Specifically, Canada, Japan, Korea and the United States stress the need for "sustainable harvest levels to ensure at least a 60% probability" of recovery no later than 2022 - and that in 2009 ICCAT members agreed "to establish a 3-year recovery plan for Eastern Atlantic Bluefin Tuna at (the) 2010 annual meeting, based on advice from the (ICCAT scientific committee), and suspend (bluefin tuna) fisheries for the eastern (Atlantic) stock in 2011 if a serious threat of fishery collapse is detected".

"The message from Canada, Japan, Korea and the United States to the whole of ICCAT could not be clearer - the time for science-based recovery and management for Atlantic bluefin is now or never, and illegal fishing and trade will no longer be tolerated," said Sergi Tudela of WWF.

"WWF appeals to the EU and all other ICCAT member countries to back this position. It is for the good of the tuna but also the good of fishermen and their families, for a consumption tradition, and for the marine ecosystem at large - if there's no more fish, there's no gain in this for anybody."

Read here the full statement from Canada, Japan, Korea and the United States:
http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ia/docs/statement_informal_meeting_may30_barcelona

Please see www.panda.org/tuna or contact WWF Mediterranean Programme for further information.

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