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MEDAC ADVICE ON THE MSE PROCESS FOR BLUEFIN TUNA MANAGEMENT IN VIEW OF ICCAT PANEL 2

Until now, management decisions have been based on scientific advice resulting from stock assessments and Virtual Population Analysis (VPA) constrained by certain uncertainties. Several Candidate Management Procedures (CMP) have therefore been developed, and an evaluation of these strategies (MSE) is underway by the various stakeholders.

During the fourth intersessional meeting of ICCAT Panel 2, stakeholders decided to eliminate the least efficient CMPs and retained two, "BR" and "FO". At this stage, the stakes rest on the choice of key performance statistics used to evaluate achievement of management objectives for the last CMPs.

On safety, the stakeholders advised that the probability of the stock falling below B_{LIM} (stock size reference point below which recruitment has a high probability of being altered) be less than 15%.

Thus, if stability and security of the stock and the economic activities are the priority of MEDAC members, it is appropriate to focus on the 3 main performance statistics left to decision: the status given by the value of PGK (60 to 70%), the management cycle (2 or 3 years) and the stability of TAC between 2 management periods (+20/-30% or +20/-35%).

According to the latest results, the probability of being in the green zone of the Kobe diagram is of paramount importance in reducing the risk of overexploitation of the stock. A probability between 60 and 70% meets the management objectives, although a PGK close to 70% is more careful for the preservation of the stock. During PA2 of the extraordinary meeting of ICCAT, results of tests with PGK65% will also be presented for the last two CMPS.

Stakeholders also expressed their preference for a 3-year management cycle, allowing more stability (fixed TAC, less adjustments). The MEDAC recognizes that a 3-year cycle would be optimal if and only if the variability of the TAC is limited to +20/-30% (in line with the default stability preferences of stakeholder), which would imply the choice of a PGK of at least 65%.

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Finally, MEDAC draws the attention of stakeholders to the need to be cautious when setting the starting TAC for the CMP that will be chosen, as not to create a risk for the stock and in particular a very significant risk of a sharp reduction in the TAC at the end of the management cycle. This scenario would not make it possible to maintain the security and stability of fishing companies, which would therefore find themselves in a situation of overcapacity.

The MEDAC therefore supports the HCR mechanism which should make it possible to reduce the level of uncertainty in the assessments as they have been carried out until now. This will make it possible to propose a long-term exploitation rate for bluefin tuna stocks in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

It will be up to each Member State to set up, if this is not already the case, a consultation with the professional fishers and the representatives of each Member State to establish an allocation of the quota, in particular in the event of an increase in the TAC and therefore the European quota.

When allocating fishing opportunities, Member States should ensure that transparent and objective criteria are used, including environmental, social and economic.