

The mismanagement of the bluefin tuna fishery in the Mediterranean

Observations from the Greenpeace ships *MY Esperanza* and *MY Rainbow Warrior* during 2006



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GREENPEACE

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1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the inability of Governments to guarantee the sustainable exploitation of bluefin tuna stocks in different parts of the world has resulted in their severe depletion. Overfishing has already led to important decreases in bluefin tuna catches from the southern bluefin tuna stock (*Thunnus maccoyii*) in the South Pacific¹ and from the western stock of the northern bluefin tuna population (*Thunnus thynnus*) in the West Atlantic, which is now the subject of a strict recovery plan². With the decline in catches in these two fisheries, the eastern stock of the northern bluefin tuna population has become the most important bluefin tuna fishery worldwide³. Catches in this fishery take place mainly in the Mediterranean Sea⁴.

Earlier this year, Greenpeace presented a detailed report about the state of the northern bluefin tuna population, with a particular focus on the eastern stock. The report "*Where have all the tuna gone? How tuna ranching and pirate fishing are wiping out Mediterranean bluefin tuna*", analyses the state of this sub-population as well as the causes of its present mismanagement, particularly in the Mediterranean region⁵.

- 1 "Southern Bluefin Tuna were heavily fished in the past, with the annual catch reaching 80,000 tonnes in the early 1960s. Heavy fishing resulted in a significant decline in the numbers of mature fish and the annual catch began to fall rapidly". Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna. www.ccsbt.org/docs/about.html.
- 2 See ICCAT Recommendation [98-07] to Establish a Rebuilding Program for Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna.
- 3 Catches from the eastern stock of the northern bluefin tuna population have probably been as high as 50,000 tonnes in 2004 and 2005, compared to a catch of 2,000 tonnes for the western stock in 2004. The southern bluefin tuna stock has yielded 13,490 tonnes in 2004.
- 4 According to official data, 68% of the catches of the eastern stock of the bluefin tuna population in 2004 were taken from the Mediterranean. This is an underestimation as according to all sources the bulk of illegal catches take place in the Mediterranean.
- 5 The report also focuses on the role of tuna ranching



Picture 1: State-of-the-art purse seiners target bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean. Despite the well known situation of overexploitation of the stock, tuna fleets greatly modernized in the last few years. ©Greenpeace/Newman.

Greenpeace concluded that the levels of illegal fishing in this fishery are probably amongst the highest in the world: up to 45,000 tonnes of bluefin tuna may have been caught each year in 2004 and 2005, compared to a legal quota of 32,000 tonnes. In the last few months, several sources have also analysed the state of this fishery, reaching very similar conclusions⁶. The 2006 Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Assessment Session of the Scientific Committee on Research and Statistics of ICCAT, which took place in Madrid last June, stated that "*the volume of catch taken in recent years likely significantly exceeds the current TAC and is likely close to the levels reported in the mid-1990s, i.e. about 50,000 t in the East Atlantic and the Mediterranean*"⁷.

The problems faced by the fishery are well established and include: the high levels of

- in the region, and can be found at <http://oceans.greenpeace.org/tuna-report/>. An executive summary of the report is also available at <http://oceans.greenpeace.org/tuna-summary/>.
- 6 WWF estimates that catches for the years 2004 and 2005 are around 45,000 tonnes and states that they could easily be over 50,000 tonnes. See *The plunder of bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean and East Atlantic in 2004 and 2005. Uncovering the real story*. WWF. May 2006.
 - 7 SCRS /2006/013. Report of the 2006 Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Assessment Session of the Scientific Committee on Research and Statistics.

illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing referred above; overcapacity (there is enough capacity in the region to harvest twice the bluefin tuna quota⁸); misreporting and extremely poor quality of the reported data, making it extremely difficult for scientists to assess the state of the population. This is coupled with poor knowledge of some of the basic parameters of bluefin tuna biology. In addition, the geographical expansion of fishing effort in recent years to cover the whole Mediterranean area, leaves no refuge for the bluefin tuna to retreat to or rebuild from. Offending countries fishing over the quota include some of the most important fishing nations in the region, such as France, Turkey and others⁹.

From May 24th to June 22nd 2006, the Greenpeace ship **MY Esperanza** sailed across the Mediterranean Sea to document fishing activities carried out by vessels targeting bluefin tuna in the region. During the course of these four weeks, the Esperanza came across fishing vessels flagged to France, Spain, Turkey, Japan and Guinea Conakry, mainly in the tuna fishing grounds north of Egypt and south of Turkey. All are parties to ICCAT. In addition, the Greenpeace flagship, the **MY Rainbow Warrior**, spent several months in the Mediterranean Sea during June, July and August, also documenting bluefin tuna fishing operations¹⁰.

8 SCRS /2006/013.

9 For example, France has recently reported to ICCAT bluefin tuna catches of 9,455 tonnes in 2005, 3,263 (or 53%) in excess of its 6,192 tonnes quota.

10 The Rainbow Warrior spent more than two months in the Mediterranean Sea as part of a tour to demand the establishment of a regional network of marine reserves. During this period, the Greenpeace ship documented different fishing fleets targetting species managed by ICCAT and denounced the violation of ICCAT regulations such as ICCAT Recommendation [03-04] relating to Mediterranean Swordfish, which entered into force on 19 June 2004, establishing that "Contracting Parties, Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities shall prohibit the use of driftnets for fisheries of large pelagics in the Mediterranean". Driftnets are still in use by some fleets in the region, such as the Italian fleet targeting swordfish.

The current submission presents the findings made by Greenpeace while at-sea. These include:

- *the use of spotter planes by EU vessels during the month of June, at a time when it is strictly prohibited;*
- *transshipments by ICCAT members in the eastern Mediterranean which are probably unregulated and unreported;*
- *illegal fishing by Japanese large-scale longliners during the closure of the fishery to these type of vessels;*
- *the inability of some of the most powerful tuna fishing vessels in the region to find tuna schools during part of the peak fishery season in the eastern Mediterranean;*
- *documentation of the Turkish fleet fishing in the Gulf of Iskenderun, likely to be fishing well above the quota allocated by ICCAT to "other countries" under which Turkey is carrying out its fishing operations;*

It is Greenpeace's view that these observations confirm the lack of controls in the region and the fact that bluefin tuna are facing very serious conservation problems. This year's scientific advice has left no doubt in this respect.

The recommendations and resolutions adopted by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) to manage the bluefin tuna stocks have proved unable to guarantee their sustainable exploitation. Illegal activities carried out mainly by countries that are members of ICCAT are widespread in the region, and the lack of effective controls may drive the Mediterranean bluefin tuna fishery to collapse in the very near future.

It is the responsibility of States party to ICCAT to put an end to this situation by adopting a strict management regime for this species at this 15th Annual Meeting of the Commission.

2. Breaking the rules: a fishery out of control

2.1. Italian vessels using a US registered spotter plane

The use of spotter planes during the month of June, when it is prohibited by ICCAT management measures¹¹, has been extensively quoted in the literature and concerns exist about the enormous difficulties of guaranteeing compliance with this measure.

On June the 27th, at 16:30 hours, the crew of the *Rainbow Warrior* spotted an American registered airplane flying overhead an Italian fishing fleet belonging to the company Pesca Azzurra on the west coast of Italy¹². The plane was a typical model used in tuna spotting operations. The fishing vessels were later observed as they held and transferred a catch of bluefin tuna from a purse seine net to a towing cage.

The registration number of the plane, a Cessna 337, was N415D, therefore registered in the US. It is an old plane, built in 1965 and its "status" with the USA FAA¹³ is "Notice Ineffectual/Invalid"¹⁴. This would indicate an irregular situation of the airplane and lack of information about its activities. Its registered owner is *Ivan Air Corp.* of Key Biscayne (Florida State, USA). Greenpeace has addressed the US government to inform about the activities carried out by this airplane and has asked that action be taken against the

owner. No response about measures adopted by the US authorities has been obtained so far.

Behind the airplane, the first two vessels to be spotted were the tug boat *Tarentum* and the well vessel *Mistral* ME 2866, involved in bluefin tuna farming operations in the area. Two purse seiners, *Nino Testa* (ME 290)¹⁵ and *S. Pietro II* (5CT 841) were also in the area. The two fishing vessels were jointly keeping the purse seine net open and slowly moving towards the tug boat to initiate a transfer operation. At least another four vessels were in the area at 17:30 h, although they could not be identified.

The *S. Pietro II* is not on the ICCAT register. Despite this, the Italian Government has allocated this vessel a quota of 26.18 tonnes.

► **Greenpeace asks the Commission to request information on the status and activities of this airplane from the US authorities.**

► **Greenpeace asks that ICCAT requests Italy to investigate the activities of this fleet and sanction the vessels involved as appropriate, including through the withdrawal of fishing authorisations.**

► **ICCAT should demand that Italy clarifies the situation of the *S. Pietro II*, which has been allocated a quota despite not being on the ICCAT register.**

11 Supplemental Recommendation [96-2] by ICCAT on East Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Concerning the Mediterranean Closed Seas prohibits the use of airplanes or helicopters supporting fishing operations in the Mediterranean Sea in the month of June.

12 This happened in position 38° 48 N, 14° 35 E, some 5 miles north of Filicudi (Eolian Island).

13 US Federal Aviation Authority.

14 In order for this aircraft to operate under the 'N' registry, under which it currently operates, it has to fly 60% of its hours in the United States. The FAA some time ago asked the owner for a breakdown of the hours flown during the past 6 months. They have received no reply. Therefore a "Notice of Apparent Ineffectiveness and Invalidation" has been put on the aircraft.

15 *Nino Testa*, ICCAT List number ATECOITA00424, call sign ILDQ, registry number ITA000003453.

2.2. Unregulated transshipments in the Mediterranean Sea

Most of the bluefin tuna caught and farmed in the Mediterranean Sea is frozen and shipped onboard refrigerated cargo vessels or *reefers*¹⁶. The activity of reefers is a matter of concern in many fisheries and one of the main ways in which illegal catches are laundered worldwide. These problems are not new to ICCAT. In 2004 the government of Japan presented information to ICCAT about two reefers¹⁷ engaged in tuna laundering activities. The data presented by the Japanese Government suggested that up to 18,000 tonnes of pirate-caught bigeye tuna in the Atlantic may have been laundered in this way in 2003 and were not reported anywhere. These catches would represent up to 21% of the 85,000 tonnes declared catch of bigeye tuna in the Atlantic Ocean in 2003. Japan advises that parties should “*work together to ensure compliance to the catch limits and other conservation and management measures. Especially, to eliminate laundering activities through at sea transshipment, ICCAT*



Picture 2: The 206 Melilla is operating as a refrigerated cargo vessel, regularly transshipping bluefin tuna from Turkish fishing vessels.
©Greenpeace/Newman.

16 WWF estimates that the maximum equivalent weight at slaughter of processed frozen bluefin tuna shipped out of the Mediterranean Sea by thirteen reefers monitored by this organisation in 2004 would amount to over 25.000 tonnes. *The plunder of bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean and East Atlantic in 2004 and 2005. Uncovering the real story.* World Wide Fund for Nature. May 2006.

17 The *Lung Yuin* and the *Suruga No1* were accused by Japan accused to “launder” pirate-caught tuna. Japan informed that these were not isolated activities but a widespread phenomenon.

*should establish measures to monitor and properly regulate transshipment*¹⁸.

On June the 17th at 11:30 h, the *Esperanza* was sailing along the channel between Turkey and the island of Cyprus, going from the Gulf of Antalya to the Gulf of Iskenderun. Greenpeace sighted what seemed to be a longliner, the Guinean flagged *206 Melilla*¹⁹. No information or record about the *206 Melilla* was found in the Lloyds database. However, the ship seems to be the *ex-Focus 101*, as this name could still be read on its hull²⁰.

Greenpeace members approached the ship and had the opportunity to talk to its crew, mainly Korean, who confirmed they were not fishing but buying bluefin tuna from fishing boats in the area. This was supported by the fact that no fishing gear was observed on the ship's deck. The crew indicated that the ship was regularly unloading its cargo in Turkey and from there the bluefin tuna was exported to Japan. Information gathered later through conversations with the crew of Turkish boats confirmed what the crew of the *206 Melilla* had explained. The captain of the Turkish vessel *HAA Ogullari II* explained that this tuna was shipped to Korea from Turkey and from there to Japan. Sources from Turkish vessels also indicated that the Turkish Government had warned them that they would be fined if they traded tuna with this vessel. It is quite clear that Turkey is not enforcing such a measure, as the *206 Melilla* seems to be operating regularly between the fishing ground and Turkish ports.

18 ICCAT Annual Report 2004-2005. Volume I.

19 The *206 Melilla* was drifting approximately in position 36° 23.7 N, 31° 36.4 E.

20 The *Focus 101*, IMO 7729796, call sign HP9177, used to be flagged to Panama. The last movement recorded for the ship in the Lloyds database reports its presence in the port of La Valetta (Malta) on March the 31st, 2005. The owners of the ship are recorded in Lloyds as unknown.

The *206 Melilla* is therefore operating as a refrigerated cargo vessel, regularly transshipping bluefin tuna from Turkish fishing vessels. *ICCAT Recommendation [97-11] on Transshipments and Vessels Sightings* requires that transshipments are reported annually to the Commission²¹.

- ▶ ***Greenpeace requests ICCAT to provide further information about the activity of the 206 Melilla and would like to know whether Guinea Conakry has submitted information about the activities of this vessel. Equally, this case raises questions about the performance of port controls in Turkey.***
- ▶ ***ICCAT should immediately outlaw at-sea transshipment except in specifically designated areas that are closely monitored and reported in real time to the Secretariat. Transshipment could also be allowed to occur in specifically designated ports, again, with real time reporting to the Secretariat on such activities.***
- ▶ ***Member states must immediately take measures, in compliance with international law, to prohibit such vessels from obtaining support from port facilities. ICCAT must also include such vessels on its blacklist.***

²¹ "Contracting Parties shall ensure that fishing vessels and mother vessels flying their flag only transfer or receive at-sea transshipment of ICCAT species from Contracting Parties and Cooperating [Parties, Entities, or Fishing Entities], as defined in the "Resolution on Becoming a Cooperating Party, Entity or Fishing Entity" adopted by the Commission in 1997. Such transshipment activities shall be reported annually to the Commission".

2.3. Japanese longliners fishing illegally in June

In the early morning of June 11th, the *Rainbow Warrior* was south of the Italian island of Sicily, approximately in position 37° 22 N and 17° 11 E. The Greenpeace crew sighted between eight and nine longliners. The vessels were setting their gear in a north-south direction. Minutes later, one of the longliners was identified as the Japanese flagged *Koryo Maru*²². Although the *Rainbow Warrior* managed to get close enough to three of the vessels to confirm they were classic Japanese-type longliners, our crew could not identify their names²³. After the Greenpeace ship passed astern of the last vessel of the group, the *Chokyu Maru N° 12*, was also identified as one of the vessels fishing in the area and images of her fishing operations were recorded²⁴.

To our knowledge there is no record of a Japanese fishery targeting swordfish in the area. According to ICCAT "*incidental catches of swordfish have also been reported by Albania, Croatia, EC-France, Japan, and Libya*"²⁵, therefore it is Greenpeace's conclusion that up to nine Japanese longliners may have been fishing for bluefin tuna in the area during the seasonal closure²⁶ that runs from June 1st to July 31st, having two of them being clearly identified.

Greenpeace has informed the Japanese government of the presence and activities of these vessels. The footage available from the

fishing operation of the *Chokyu Maru N° 12* has been made available to the Japanese Fisheries Agency and it is Greenpeace's view that the Japanese authorities should be in a position to identify the rest of the vessels through their VMS systems and take action accordingly.

In response to Greenpeace, the Japanese authorities have replied that through the footage they received they could identify the *Chokyu Maru N° 12* conducting fishing operations and that they would inform of any further measures taken.

► Japan should identify the vessels concerned and sanction these vessels unless they can verify that they were not fishing for bluefin tuna during this period. Japan should also cross-check the catch data submitted by such vessels. This information must be made publicly available and must be reported to the Commission.

► All industrial vessels permitted to fish in the ICCAT Convention Area must be required to carry an independent observer onboard who reports directly to the Commission and this management measure must be agreed at this meeting of the Commission.

22 *Koryo Maru*, call sign JJWU, registration number TY1-185, ICCAT register AT000JPN00536.

23 Vessel 1: Position 37°20.15 N, 17°07.15 E, course 211, speed 12.2 kts, setting line; vessel 2: Position 37°20.80 N, 17°11.80 E, course 211, speed 12.2 kts, setting line; vessel 3: Position 37°30.32 N, 17°19.02 E, course 211, speed 12.2 kts, setting line.

24 The *Chokyu Maru N° 12*, call sign JIHM, registration number ME1-865, ICCAT register AT000JPN00065, was found in position 37°26.3 N, 17°05.6 E, course 212, speed 12.2 knots at 0923 UTC. The vessel was filmed by the *Rainbow Warrior* crew.

25 Report for the biennial period, 2004-05, part II (2005) - Vol. 2, executive summary on swordfish.

26 ICCAT Recommendation [02-08].

3. The eastern Mediterranean: the chase for the last tuna refugees

3.1. French and Spanish vessels unable to find tuna north of Egypt

One of the more recent developments in the Mediterranean bluefin tuna fishery is linked to the extremely high mobility of modern tuna purse seine fleets operating in the region, particularly the French and Spanish ones. Several experts have expressed concerns about the migration of these fleets, as they have left their more traditional fishing grounds around the Balearic Islands to go fishing off the coasts of Libya and Egypt.

Rather than reflecting the healthy state of the stock, high bluefin tuna catches in recent years may well reflect the migration of these fleets, which are now targeting previously unexploited sub-populations in the eastern Mediterranean. This is, however, very difficult to assess, due to the poor quality of the data reported by countries party to ICCAT²⁷. For example, it seems clear that both catches and the CPUEs of fleets operating around the Balearic Islands have severely declined this year²⁸.

27 The SCRS, for instance, states that “*The Mediterranean nowadays supports bluefin tuna fishing all over its entire surface [...] no longer exist refuge for bluefin tuna during the spawning season*”. The same SCRS report explains that “*only ~3% of bluefin tuna yields are reported by 5° x5° degrees squares in the Mediterranean*” and that there are “*several critical difficulties and problems*” to analyse CPUE data from the purse seining fleet, including “*the expansion of the purse seine fisheries that has lead to the development of several new fishing grounds*” or “*the lack of information on the spatial location of the catch*”. SCRS/2006/013.

28 WWF estimates that CPUE in the Western Mediterranean by Spanish and French purse seiners are now less than five tonnes per day per vessel, while in the Levant Sea they they are over thirty t/day/vessel. Around Spain's Balearic Islands bluefin tuna catches declined this year to just 15 percent of what they were a decade ago. In 1995 some 14,700 metric tons were caught there, while just 2,270 metric tons have been fished in the same waters in 2006.



Picture 3: The French purse seiners Jean Marie Christian IV and Jean Marie Christian VI, and the Spanish Nuevo Panchilleta. ©Greenpeace/Newman.

Different sources seem to point in this direction, confirming the bad state of the western Mediterranean fishing grounds.

The Esperanza sailed to the fishing grounds in the eastern Mediterranean to document the activities of the fleets in the area. On June 3rd the Greenpeace ship came across the vessels

Jean Marie Christian IV, flagged to France, and the Spanish *Nuevo Panchilleta*. They were found north of Egypt, heading west and cruising at 12 knots²⁹. These two vessels were part of a French and Spanish fleet that was operating in the area during that period. On June 6th, Greenpeace found both vessels at anchor together with another four vessels in the bay of Ierapetra (Crete)³⁰. These vessels constitute probably the most modern and powerful bluefin tuna fleet in the whole region, built with the assistance of European Union structural funds as well as national subsidies from EU Member States such as France and Spain³¹.

On June 10th, the *Esperanza* followed these ships back to the fishing grounds. For a week Greenpeace could follow them as they searched for tuna in the region, literally criss-crossing the entire area between the north of Alamein (Egypt) and the Egyptian border with Libya, without finding a single tuna school. For approximately two weeks during the peak of the fishery these vessels did not catch any tuna. During this time, Greenpeace members had the opportunity to speak to the captains of these vessels who unanimously agreed that the fishing season was to date yielding very poor catches. A French captain also recognised publicly that the French fleet has regularly exceeded their quota in previous years as this is the only way their activities can remain profitable. The issue of overcapacity in the bluefin tuna fishery is certainly one of the

major problems that has to be dealt with. While Spain has six purse seiners that had the right to catch a quota of 6,276 tonnes of bluefin tuna in 2005, the French fleet is made of more than 30 purse seiners with a license to harvest almost the same amount of tuna (6,192 tonnes in 2005).

The question of overcapacity in the bluefin tuna fishery has to be dealt with urgently, or, in the absence of proper controls in the region, fishing vessels will find ways to launder their catches in order to make their activities economically viable.

► ***The ICCAT Scientific Committee needs to provide the Commission with clear information on the state of the stock in this area. If data is insufficient, this area should be closed on a precautionary basis until clear stock assessment data can be obtained and it can be shown that such a fishery can be sustainable.***

► ***ICCAT needs to investigate whether claims by such vessel captains that they are routinely exceeding their quotas is correct by analysing catch data. The French government must take action to effectively regulate the activities of its flagged vessels and ensure that they abide by quota rules.***

► ***An independent observers scheme onboard all industrial vessels is urgently required.***

► ***Countries party to ICCAT need to agree on a binding agreement to eliminate overcapacity in the fishery, in line with sustainable fishing opportunities, that prevents the industry from using loopholes such as reflagging of fishing vessels and migration of fishing capacity to other areas.***

29 The French flagged *Jean Marie Christian IV* was found in position 31° 34.50 N, 28° 40.94 E, and the Spanish flagged *Nuevo Panchilleta* was in position 31° 35.49 N, 28° 28.90 E.

30 This fleet included the French vessels *Jean Marie Christian III*, *Jean Marie Christian IV*, *Jean Marie Christian V* and *Jean Marie Christian VI*, and the Spanish vessel *Nuevo Panchilleta*.

31 Both the French and Spanish purse seiner fleet targeting bluefin tuna have been almost completely renewed in the last few years. Instead of being scrapped, some of the old French purse seiners were reflagged to Lybia. It's been estimated that at least €19-20 million of public funds having been allocated by the EU to the fish and farming industry in the last few years.

3.2. The Turkish fleet in the Gulf of Iskenderun

From June 16th to June 21st the *Esperanza* came across at least 17 Turkish flagged vessels in the international waters off the Gulf of Iskenderun, South of Turkey³². These vessels included purse seiners targeting bluefin tuna, tug boats and purse seiners taking part in tugging operations and other activities. Greenpeace members interviewed several of their captains and crew and exchanged information with them³³. From the information exchanged with the captains and crews of the vessels we encountered, a number of questions arise about the management of the bluefin tuna fishery and, more concretely, about the tuna operations carried out by Turkish vessels and companies.

One of the issues of particular concern is the big disparity between the (absence of a) quota allocated by ICCAT to Turkey and its fishing and farming capacity. Turkey currently carries out its tuna fishing operations under the quota allocated by ICCAT to “other countries”, which in 2006 amounted to 823 tons.

Although Greenpeace recognises that the fact that Turkey does not have a quota under the ICCAT management regime is a fundamental problem that has to be solved through a more fair quota allocation agreement, the size of its fleet and its current tuna ranching capacity, are certainly too high, and result in a very high

incentive for illegal operations, particularly given the absence of adequate controls in the region.

The capacity of the Turkish fishing fleet

The capacity of the Turkish fleet is a matter of concern. Most of the captains and crew from the Turkish flagged vessels encountered by Greenpeace declared to have started tuna fishing and farming operations only five years ago.

In correspondence between Greenpeace and Nedim Anbar, from the Tuna Ranching and Export Association, he states that “*there is no certain number of tuna catch vessels*” but that “*approximately there were 60 tuna vessels in the last four years*”. However, other sources point to over 100 purse seiners³⁴. The ICCAT Record of Vessels³⁵ lists 442 Turkish vessels with a fishing license to operate in the ICCAT convention area, however for none of them does ICCAT have information about the kind of vessel or the gear type. Some of the vessels observed by Greenpeace are not on the

32 The vessels the *Esperanza* came across are: *Abdullah Mellek* (34.05.TG.420), *Aksoy Kardesler* (17.00.G.1091), *Akua Dem 2*, *Avcı Baba* (61.33.G.0074), *Aydin Toker* (34.22.TG.2677), *Bedevi Reis* (34.22.G.261), *Cakir Baba* (34.08.TG.2546), *Eminogullari 4* (34.22.G.2441), *Fatoglu Kardesler I* (28.02.GY.0007), *H.A.A. Ogullari II* (34.22.TG.0632), *Ibrahim Reis III* (34.22.GO.429), *Kazim Kuloglu* (34.10.G.2060), *Kaplan Kardesler* (34.22.GO.827), *Kerem Balikbilik III* (61.16.G.0065), *Koc Aliler* (34.22.TG.2337), *Sengul Kardesler* (34.22.TG.2469), *Zeytinoglu* (34.33.T.0759).

33 On June 19th members of Greenpeace had the opportunity to hold a meeting on-board one of the fleet's mother ship, the *Akua Dem 2*, at the invitation of one of the managers of the Turkish company *Akua Group*, Hasan Serefoglu.



Picture 4: The Turkish purse seiner *Sengul Kardesler*. No precise information exist about the number o Turkish purse seiners targeting bluefin tuna. ©Greenpeace/Newman.

34 Leonart, J. and Majkowski, J. Summary report on bluefin tuna capture fishing for farming/fattening in the Mediterranean. GFCM/ICCAT Working Group on sustainable Tuna Farming/Fattening practices in the Mediterranean. Rome, 16-18 March 2005.

35 See Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Establishment of an ICCAT Record of Vessels over 24 m Authorized to Operate in the Convention Area.

ICCAT register and although it is very difficult to determine whether they were actually fishing or taking part in tugging operations, it is very clear that the fact that old purse seiners are taking part in these operations makes very hard to assess the real effort that exists in the fishery or exert an effective control over it.

According to the Tuna Ranching and Export Association, the Turkish catch was 1,075 tonnes in 2004, 990 t in 2005 and 800 t in 2006. These figures are not compatible with the number of purse seiners cited by the Union. Estimations by WWF, for instance, estimate a catch of over 3,760 tonnes in 2005³⁶, which would seem more realistic from a fleet of around 60 vessels.

On-board the *Akua Dem 2*, one of the Turkish fleet's mother ship, Greenpeace heard explanations of the difference between the declared Turkish tuna catches and its current fisheries production and farming capacity, stating that Turkey has been buying quota from other ICCAT members, specifically Libya, South Korea and Morocco. Greenpeace addressed the Turkish government to clarify if this is the case. No official government response has been forthcoming. The Tuna Ranching and Export Association indicates that Turkey imported 1,543 tonnes of bluefin tuna to be fattened in Turkish farms in 2004 and 2,485 tonnes in 2005. This is still far below the farming capacity of this country. The claim that Turkey would have bought quota from other countries was denied in the correspondence.

The Turkish tuna ranching capacity

In contrast with the absence of a fishing quota, the number of Turkish tuna farms has increased in the latest updated statistics from ICCAT, from 6 earlier this year to 12 now. Tuna farming capacity has also increased, from 6,300 tonnes to 9,460 tonnes this year³⁷.

³⁶ *The plunder of bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean and East Atlantic in 2004 and 2005. Uncovering the real story.* WWF. May 2006.

³⁷ This makes Turkey the second biggest tuna ranching

According to the Tuna Ranching and Export Association the Turkish output from the tuna farms would have been 4,250 tonnes in 2004 and 5,214 tonnes in 2005. The growth of tuna in the farms needed to obtain this production (x1.5 fattening ratio) is considered by experts to be simply impossible given the bluefin tuna metabolism. Tuna ranching overcapacity is clearly making impossible to control bluefin tuna catches in the Mediterranean regions, and suspected unreported catches may be very easily hidden behind expected growth rates in the farms.

Finally, despite the fact that Turkish fishermen have only been fishing for bluefin tuna for the last five years, in almost all cases they described the decrease in the size of tuna season after season as one of their main concerns. This is very worrying as the Turkish fishing fleet is targeting a discrete bluefin tuna sub-population, almost untouched until only five years ago.

► ***Turkey needs to provide ICCAT with all the details of the vessels fishing in the convention area, as required by the ICCAT Recommendation Concerning the Establishment of an ICCAT Record of Vessels over 24 m.***

► ***The state of the sub-population targeted by the Turkish fleet needs to be urgently assessed. Accurate catch and effort data must be provided to the ICCAT scientific committee and the capacity of the fleet operating in the area needs to be urgently adapted to a sustainable take from this subpopulation.***

► ***The capacity of the tuna farms in the Mediterranean have to be urgently decreased to a level which avoids widespread laundering of bluefin tuna catches in the region.***

country in the Mediterranean after Spain (in terms of number of farms) although Malta's ranching capacity is approximately the same from fewer farms.

4. Conclusions

The disastrous situation of the bluefin tuna fishery in the Mediterranean Sea is another clear example of how current oceans management is fundamentally flawed. Marine biodiversity is being plundered because of the lack of appropriate management measures and monitoring, control and surveillance operations and ultimately because of the lack of political will. Private interests combined with weak rules and enforcement, and the absence of any will from Governments to act are severely undermining the wellbeing of the marine environment³⁸.

The case of the bluefin tuna fishery shows that neither Governments nor regional bodies are in a position to enforce fisheries regulations in the region. Countries are not complying with their international obligations, and not even basic data is available to reliably assess the state of the stock. Misreporting and under-reporting are widespread in the region. Governments with vessels involved in the fishery have not only allowed the increase of fishing effort on an already overexploited species, they have even greatly contributed to it. At present, the tuna fishing industry in the Mediterranean is digging a grave, not only for the bluefin tuna, but also for the many fishermen who depend upon it.

Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, such as ICCAT, are only as strong as the determination exercised by their member states to fulfill their objectives. In the case of bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean, it is the responsibility of the ICCAT Contracting Parties to put an end to the current dire situation **by adopting a strict recovery plan set on a precautionary basis**. Contracting Parties should push for substantial changes in the way ICCAT currently operates in line with the



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principles contained in the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, and particularly articles 5 and 6 on the ecosystem approach and precautionary principle in fisheries management.

³⁸ See *Freedom for the seas, for now & for the future*. Greenpeace proposals to revolutionise oceans governance. Greenpeace. May 2005. Available at <http://oceans.greenpeace.org/en/documents-reports/freedom-for-the-seas>.

5. Recommendations

Governments party to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas must establish mandatory rules and comply with the existing ones, particularly in relation with their reporting requirements. The fishery should be closed unless new management measures that guarantee the future of the fishery are put in place. If this is not done now, in the very near future, there will literally be no fishery to manage with huge costs to the marine environment and the communities dependent on it for sustainable livelihoods.

The Scientific advice from the SCRS has been extremely clear this year: *“The only scenarios which have potential to address the declines and initiate recovery are those which (in combination) close the Mediterranean to fishing during the spawning season and decrease mortality on small fish through fully enforced increases in minimum size. Realized catches during the next few years implied by fully implementing these actions are expected to be in the order of 15 000 t”*³⁹.

Urgent measures to be approved by ICCAT, as part of a wider recovery plan, should include:

- an expansion of the closure of the fishery to guarantee a strong, immediate and enforceable decrease in the fishing effort on the population. Industrial fishing of bluefin tuna in the East Atlantic and the Mediterranean must be prohibited from the 1st of May to the 31st of July;
- a substantial reduction in the bluefin tuna quota as part of a long term tuna rebuilding program set on a precautionary and ecosystem basis; in accordance with the scientific advice this year, the maximum Total Allowable Catch (TAC) should be 15,000 tonnes;
- the closure to fishing of the northern bluefin tuna's Mediterranean breeding and spawning grounds, particularly around the Balearic Islands;
- a new minimum landing size that matches the sexual maturity of the species, increasing it to at least 30 kg;
- an independent observer scheme both on board tuna fishing and transport vessels and in the farms to record and report on tuna catches. This is vital to ensure that under-sized fish are not caught and the quota is not exceeded, and that the information needed to sustainably manage the fishery is available. The Mediterranean tuna fishing industry has clearly demonstrated that without independent observation they do not follow the rules or report the true nature and extent of their catches;
- submission of accurate fishing and farming information to ICCAT on a regular basis, and public access to that information. The system should be designed for ICCAT to have real time access to the fishing data;
- countries party to ICCAT need to agree on a binding agreement to eliminate overcapacity in the fishery, in line with sustainable fishing opportunities, that prevents the industry from using loopholes such as reflagging of fishing vessels and migration of fishing capacity to other areas.
- ICCAT should immediately outlaw at-sea transshipment except in specifically designated areas that are closely monitored and reported in real time to the Secretariat. Transshipment could also be allowed to occur in specifically designated ports, again, with real time reporting to the Secretariat on such activities;

³⁹ 2006 SCRS – BFT-E Executive Summary. Doc. No. SCI-021 B/ 2006.

- finally, the expansion of tuna ranching must not only be stopped until the northern bluefin tuna population recovers, but Governments should agree on a mechanism to decrease the current capacity of the tuna farms to avoid widespread laundering of bluefin tuna catches in the region.

Time is running out for the northern bluefin tuna of the Mediterranean. Unless these steps are taken now, ICCAT will be remembered as managing the collapse of one of the most important and profitable fisheries of our time, the decimation of one of the oceans' champion species, and the disintegration of a way of life for the fishermen of the region dependent on this ecosystem for their livelihoods.



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