



**Low Impact Fishers of Europe
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Bluefin Tuna, ICCAT and Access for Small-Scale Fisheries

The Mediterranean small-scale fishing fleet (under 12 metres, non-towed gear) is by far the largest fleet segment, with just under 70% of the fleet in 2015 according to the 2017 STECF AEP report. Although producing only 25% of the overall catch in the Mediterranean, the fleet accounts for 65% of the fishing days, and 42% of employment. Until 2006, the Mediterranean and other small-scale fleets were permitted to catch Bluefin tuna, which provided a significant seasonal source of income for them, and an important opportunity to reduce their efforts on other stocks.

Since 2006, under the ICCAT Bluefin Tuna recovery plan, small scale fishers have been effectively stopped from catching Bluefin tuna, with the consequent loss of an important source of income. This has meant that they have had to fall back on other, lower value species, with a consequent decline in their incomes and an increase in pressure on other stocks. Despite Article 17 of the CFP, and Article 8 of Bluefin tuna multiannual plan regulation which call for a fair distribution of national quotas across fleet segments and for incentives to be provided for selective and low impact fishing, this unfair situation is repeated across EU Member States. The EU's Bluefin tuna multiannual recovery plan for bluefin tuna (Regulation (EU) 2016/1627) also stresses the importance of promoting coastal fishing activities, including in traditional and artisanal fisheries.

The recovery of Bluefin tuna stocks and the increase in the TAC allocated to Europe from ICCAT provide the opportunity to end the unfair discrimination against coastal fishing activities, to alleviate the economic difficulties experienced by many small-scale fishers, and to take the pressure off other fish stocks in the Mediterranean. In this regard, the strategic importance of Bluefin tuna to alleviate the general state of overexploitation in the Mediterranean, in line with the MedFish4ever Declaration, can't be underestimated.

The small-scale fishers are ready to play their part in implementing the necessary management and control measures needed to assure that their activities contribute to achieving social, economic and environmental sustainability.

In the attached video, small-scale fishers from Malta, France and Spain make their case for being incorporated into a Bluefin tuna recovery plan, and call for a ring-fenced Bluefin tuna quota for vessels under 12 metres using hooks and lines. Thank you in advance for giving to their message the attention it deserves.

Best Regards

Brian O'Riordan, LIFE's Deputy Director