

Inconsistencies between catch and trade data for Spanish recorded exports of Mediterranean bluefin tuna in 2006¹

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Introduction

In 2006, Spain had an allocated bluefin tuna quota of 6,266 tonnes.² Provisional 2006 catches reported by Spain – as shown in the ICCAT Task I Database – amount to 4,722 t of bluefin tuna. Both figures are in contrast with available trade data showing that Spain exported 8,964 t. of bluefin tuna in 2006.

The following table summarises recorded Spanish exports of bluefin tuna in 2006 as well as reported bluefin tuna catches by area and gear in that same year. Sources of information are explained in the footnotes below.

Reported exports and catches of bluefin tuna in 2006. All figures in tonnes.		
Area and gear	Recorded 2006 exports ³	Reported 2006 catches
East Atlantic, bait boat	4.73 ⁴	1,065.00 ⁵
East Atlantic, hand	2.28 ⁴	4.00 ⁵
East Atlantic, traps	1,136.96 ⁴	820.00 ⁵
East and Central Atlantic, troll	-	125.00 ⁵
East Atlantic, longline	-	18.00 ⁵
Mediterranean, longline	200.29 ⁴	669.00 ⁵
Mediterranean, other gears	20.95 ⁴	-
Mediterranean, purse seine farmed	4,377.53 ⁴	2,013.00 ⁵
Mediterranean, trap	12.55 ⁴	-
Mediterranean, sport	-	8.00 ⁵
Mediterranean, unclassified	185.52 ⁴	-
Other exports	3,044.72 ⁶	-
TOTAL	8,964.58	4,722.00

1 This information has been elaborated from data and analysis contained in the ATRT, SL report “*The plunder of bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean 2006-2007*”. The full ATRT report can be downloaded at <http://yuntaa.com/FileManager/Download.aspx?ContentID=3D9F65A2F5DE0161E040A8C0030206B8>, password: tuna2007.

2 EC Council Regulation (EC) No 51/2006 of 22 December 2005.

3 Recorded exports shown here correspond to round weight equivalent, applying official ICCAT conversion rates.

4 Exports by area and gear as reported in the following ICCAT Biannual Reports: ICCAT Circular 1776-06 by Korea; ICCAT Circular 1847-06 by Japan; ICCAT Circular 1929-06 by the EU; ICCAT Circular 2096-06 by Thailand; ICCAT Circular 2157-06 by the USA; ICCAT Circular 0025-07 by Turkey; ICCAT Circular 0228-07 by Croatia; ICCAT Circular 0239-07 by Tunisia; ICCAT Circular 0382-07 by Croatia; ICCAT Circular 0430-07 by Morocco; ICCAT Circular 0541-07 by the USA; ICCAT Circular 0614-07 by the EU; ICCAT Circular 0627-07 by Japan; ICCAT Circular 0630-07, by Thailand; ICCAT Circular 1040-07 by Turkey; ICCAT Circular 1089-07 by Korea.

5 Available at <http://iccat.es/t1.asp>.

6 Trade recorded in Eurostat under Taric codes 03023500, 03023510, 03023590, 03034500, 03034500, 03034511, 03034513, 03034519, 03034590, 0304103860, 0304109850, 0304204510, 0304909770 and importing countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kuwait, Latvia, Libya, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Russia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Sweden, Romania, Spain, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and United Kingdom. No gear or area is specified.

Discussion

Two sets of data are used to estimate Spanish exports of bluefin tuna. Trade data showing exports classified by area and gear are taken from ICCAT biannual reports. These show Spanish exports to Japan, the US, Korea and other countries that communicate to ICCAT their imports of several tuna and tuna-like species twice a year.⁷ To avoid double counting, Eurostat data used here correspond to Spanish exports of bluefin tuna to countries other than those for which ICCAT biannual reports are available.⁸ These amount to 3,044 tonnes of bluefin tuna. It can be safely assumed that the bulk of these 3,044 tonnes cannot be farmed bluefin tuna, as the price in these export markets cannot compete with that obtained in the Japanese market. All farmed bluefin tuna with the exception of a tiny percentage goes to Japan.

Spanish trade data on bluefin tuna as seen in the table above is clearly inconsistent. Conservation organizations Greenpeace and WWF are concerned that Spain appear to have exported almost 9,000 tonnes of bluefin tuna in 2006, while having reported to ICCAT catches of 4,722 tonnes.

Of the 8,964 tonnes of bluefin tuna exported by Spain in 2006, a maximum of 2,242 tonnes could have been fished in 2005 – corresponding to bluefin tuna caught by purse seiners, introduced into tuna farms and slaughtered in early 2006. But using the same logic it must be considered that an equivalent amount of bluefin caught by purse seiners in 2006 would not have been exported until 2007, and is therefore not included in these 8,964 tonnes exported in 2006.⁹

Reasons for concern

In the past few weeks several scandals have hit again the Mediterranean bluefin tuna industry. These include officially reported catches by France of over 10,000 tonnes of bluefin tuna in 2007, and the traffic of 'paper quota' between Mediterranean fishermen to avoid surpassing catch limits. These scandals have taken place during the first year of implementation of ICCAT's so-called bluefin tuna 'recovery plan'¹⁰ and despite the new control measures contained in that plan.

Both Greenpeace and WWF are unable to identify justification for such a high level of exports, and request that Spanish fisheries authorities conduct an urgent in-depth investigation of the origin of these bluefin tuna exports, as they would appear to be indicative of either very high levels of unreporting of bluefin tuna domestic catches or large-scale laundering in Spain of overquota harvests.

Preliminary analyses for 2007 show a similar pattern, pointing to a persistent situation.

7 For a list of countries see footnote 4.

8 A list is provided in footnote 6.

9 As a minimum estimate, 1,014 tonnes of bluefin tuna were exported from Spain to Japan in January, February and March 2007, that would correspond to purse seine bluefin tuna having been caught in 2006, farmed and slaughtered in 2007.

10 ICCAT Recommendation [06-05].