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COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) 2026/497

of 4 March 2026

amending Regulation (EU) 2023/2053 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the management of bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and in the Mediterranean

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2023/2053 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 September 2023 establishing a multiannual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean, amending Regulations (EC) No 1936/2001, (EU) 2017/2107, and (EU) 2019/833 and repealing Regulation (EU) 2016/1627 ([1]), and in particular Article 66, paragraph 1, points (a) to (c) and (k), thereof,

Whereas:

(1) The Union is party to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), having approved the ICCAT Convention pursuant to Council Decision 86/238/EEC ([2]).

(2) ICCAT adopts measures to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources in the ICCAT Convention area and to safeguard the marine ecosystems in which these resources occur. Such measures may become binding upon the Union.

(3) Since the last amendment to Regulation (EU) 2023/2053 ([3]), ICCAT has adopted, at its 2025 annual meeting, Recommendation 25-04 in relation to the management of bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and in the Mediterranean ([4]). ICCAT Recommendation 25-04 includes provisions on a revision of the amount of unused bluefin tuna quota that can be carried over from one year to the next, the purse seine fishing season and the procedures for communicating information in the event of infringements within the framework of the Joint Inspection Scheme. Those measures should be implemented into Union law.

(4) Moreover, a number of amendments need to be made to Regulation (EU) 2023/2053 to update the entirety of the minimum standards for video recording procedures in Annex X.

(5) As the provisions provided for in this Regulation have a direct impact on the planning of the fishing season of Union vessels and on related economic activities, this Regulation should enter into force as soon as possible,

([1]) OJ L 238, 27.9.2023, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2053/oj.

([2]) Council Decision 86/238/EEC of 9 June 1986 on the accession of the Community to the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, as amended by the Protocol annexed to the Final Act of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the States Parties to the Convention signed in Paris on 10 July 1984 (OJ L 162, 18.6.1986, p. 33, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/1986/238/oj).

([3]) Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2025/837 of 7 February 2025 amending Regulation (EU) 2023/2053 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the management of bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and in the Mediterranean (OJ L, 2025/837, 2.5.2025, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2025/837/oj).

([4]) Recommendation 25-04 by ICCAT replacing Recommendation 24-05 establishing a multiannual management plan for bluefin tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean, https://iccat.int/Documents/Recs/compendiopdf-e/2025-04-e.pdf.

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

Article 1

Regulation (EU) 2023/2053 is amended as follows:

(1) in Article 8, paragraph 2 is replaced by the following;

'2. A Member State may request to transfer a maximum percentage of 20 % of its annual quota from one year to the following year. The Member State concerned shall include that request in its annual fishing and capacity management plans to be included in the Union fishing and capacity management plan for endorsement by ICCAT.';

(2) Article 17 is amended as follows:

(a) paragraph 1 is replaced by the following:

'1. Purse seine fishing for bluefin tuna shall be permitted in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean from 19 May until 1 July of each year.';

(b) paragraph 4a is replaced by the following:

'4a. By way of derogation from paragraph 1, the purse seine fishing season in the Cantabrian Sea (ICES fishing areas 27.8.b and 27.8.c) for farming purposes shall be from 26 May to 31 August.';

(c) the following paragraph 4b is inserted:

'4b. By way of derogation from paragraph 1, Spain may request in its annual fishing plan for 2026, as referred to in Article 11, that purse seine vessels involved in the pilot project for farming bluefin tuna in the Canary Islands be allowed to fish for bluefin tuna from 15 March to 30 May in FAO zone 34.';

(3) in Article 26, paragraph 1, the following subparagraph is added after point (b) of the first subparagraph:
'The period for submission of the vessel lists may be less than one month for the list of vessels in point (b) where the submission is due to changes in modality.';

(4) Annexes VIII, IX, X, XII and XVb are amended in accordance with the Annex to this Regulation.

Article 2

This Regulation shall enter into force on the day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.

Done at Brussels, 4 March 2026.

For the Commission
The President
Ursula VON DER LEYEN

ANNEX

Annexes VIII, IX, X, XII and XVb to Regulation (EU) 2023/2053 are amended as follows:

(1) in Annex VIII, Section I, paragraph 4, point (b) is replaced by the following:

'(b) verify and, where appropriate, sign the information in the processing and/or harvesting declarations made by the master of the processing vessel, or the master's representative, or by the trap operator.';

(2) in Annex VIII, Section II, subsection C, paragraph f, point (iii) is replaced by the following:

'(iii) in both cases, verify the release order issued by the competent authority of the Member State or CPC concerned and, where appropriate, sign the information in the release declaration made by the donor or farm operator;';

(3) in Annex VIII, Section II, subsection C, paragraph g, point (ii) is replaced by the following:

'(ii) verify and, where appropriate, sign the information in the processing and harvesting declarations made by the master of the processing vessel or its representative, or by the farm operator;';

(4) in Annex IX, the following paragraph is added to point 12:

'Upon receipt of inspection reports indicating apparent infringements, the ICCAT Secretariat shall make available this information on the ICCAT website in a secure manner and with restricted access. Any subsequent information regarding follow-up actions taken by the flag CPC shall also be published as it becomes available to the Secretariat. The information shall be presented in accordance with the table of the Appendix to this Annex.';

(5) in Annex IX, the following appendix is added:

'*Appendix*

Information to be provided on the actions taken in response to the findings of inspections carried out under the Scheme of Joint International Inspection

Inspection report number	Inspecting party CPC	Fishing vessel CPC	Date of inspection	Vessel / Fishing gear type	Inspection findings (1)	Infringement confirmed by flag CPC: Y/N	State of play follow-up (2)	Measures taken (3)	Remarks (4)

(1) Description of findings with indication of the legal provision(s) concerned.
(2) Under investigation, appeal, closed, etc.
(3) Judicial or administrative measures taken, such as rerouting the vessel, seizure of catches or fishing gear, suspension or withdrawal of authorisation, fines, etc.
(4) Free text with any details the flag CPC wishes to provide. Where no action was taken, detailed explanation of reasons for not taking action.';

(6) Annex X is replaced by the following:

'*ANNEX X*

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR VIDEO RECORDING PROCEDURES APPLICABLE TO TRANSFER, CAGING AND RELEASE OPERATIONS

1. The following procedures shall apply to all video recordings of transfer, caging and release operations referred to in this Regulation:

(a) at the beginning or the end of each video, the ICCAT transfer or caging authorisation number or release order and the number on the cage(s) (as indicated in the transfer declaration – ITD) shall be displayed;

(b) the time and the date of the video shall be continuously displayed throughout each video record;

(c) the video record shall be continuous without any interruptions and cuts, and cover the entire transfer, caging or release operation;

(d) before the start of the transfer, caging or release operation, the video record shall include the opening and closing of the net or door and, for transfers and caging operations, show whether the receiving and donor cage(s) already contain bluefin tuna;

(e) the video record shall be of sufficient quality to determine the number and, where appropriate the weight, of bluefin tuna being transferred, caged or released;

(f) a copy of the video record shall be kept on board the donor vessel, or by the farm or trap operator where appropriate, during the entire period they have authorisation to operate;

(g) the electronic storage device containing the original video record shall be immediately provided to the ICCAT regional observer and/or national observer after the end of the transfer, caging and/or release operation. The ICCAT regional observer and/or national observer shall immediately initialise it to avoid any further manipulation.

2. Each flag, trap and farm Member State concerned shall establish the necessary measures to avoid any replacement, editing or manipulation of the original video records.

Insufficient quality of the video record

3. If the video record is of insufficient quality to determine the number and, where appropriate the weight, of bluefin tuna being transferred, caged or released, the operation shall be repeated until the quality of the video is adequate, following the procedures below:

(a) for a transfer, the transfer operation concerned shall be repeated in accordance with Article 43a (voluntary and control transfers).

For those transfers where the origin of the fish is a trap, the bluefin tuna already transferred from the trap to the receiving cage could be sent back to the trap and the voluntary transfer is cancelled under the supervision of the ICCAT regional observer;

(b) for a caging operation, the caging operation concerned shall be repeated in accordance with points 2 and 3 of Article 49.

The new caging operation must include movement of all the bluefin tuna from the receiving farm cage into another farm cage, which must be empty;

(c) for releases, the segregation of the fish to be released shall be repeated in accordance with the release Protocol set out in Annex XII.';

(7) in Annex XII, paragraph 7 is replaced by the following:

'7. The ICCAT regional observer shall verify, and where appropriate, sign the information in the release declaration. The donor operator or farm operator shall submit the release declaration to its authorities within 48 hours of the release operation taking place for transmission to the ICCAT Secretariat.';

(8) in Annex XVb, the table is replaced by the following:

'Template for a processing declaration and harvesting declaration

Processing / Harvesting (please circle either)
Date of harvesting(d/m/y): / /
Farm / Trap (please circle either)
Cage number(s):
Number of individuals harvested:
Live weight in kg of the harvested bluefin tuna:
Processed weight in kg of the harvested bluefin tuna:
eBCD number(s) associated with the bluefin tuna harvested:
Details of auxiliary vessels involved in the operation: Name: Flag: ICCAT Registration No.:
Destination of the harvested tuna (export, local market, or other) (please circle) In case of other, please specify:
Verification and, where appropriate, signature by the ICCAT regional observer or CPC observer, as appropriate: Observer Name: ICCAT No.: Signature:'