



Regional Coordination Group
Large Pelagics

Regional Coordination Group on Large Pelagics

RCG LP 2022 REPORT

15 – 17 June 2022
Virtual MS Teams meeting

Supported by



RCG's Secretariat

**Co-funded by
the European Maritime
and Fisheries Fund**



Recommended format for purposes of citation:

RCG LP 2022. Regional Coordination Group on Large Pelagics. 2022. Annual Technical Meeting Report, 27 pgs. (<https://www.fisheries-rcg.eu/rcg-lp/>)

The material in this report may be reused using the recommended citation. The RCG may only grant usage rights of information, data, images, graphs, etc. of which it has ownership. For other third-party material cited in this report, you must contact the original copyright holder for permission. For citation of datasets or use of data to be included in other databases, please refer to the latest RCG and ICES data policy on the ICES website. All extracts must be acknowledged. For other reproduction requests please contact the authors.

This document is the product of a Regional Coordination Group under the auspices of the Expert Group on Fisheries Data Collection (EC - DCF) and does not necessarily represent the view of the EU Expert Group (NCs).

© 2022 Regional Coordination Group



Contents

Contents.....	iii
Acronyms.....	iv
Executive summary.....	5
1. Terms of Reference.....	6
2. Progress report on ToRs and work plan.....	7
2.1. Feedback from Commission on DCF.....	7
2.2. ISSG Tropical Tunas, state of play.....	8
2.2.1. Sub-ISSG Tropical Tuna Treatment (T3).....	9
2.2.2. Sub-ISSG Observers.....	9
2.3. ISSG Longlines fisheries outside Mediterranean Sea, state of play.....	10
2.4. ISSG Mediterranean Sea large pelagics fisheries, state of play.....	10
2.5. ISSG Bluefin tuna, state of play.....	11
2.6. ISSG Baitboat/pole and line, state of play.....	13
2.7. ISSG RDB (Regional Data Base).....	13
2.8. ICCAT feedback.....	14
2.9. IOTC feedback.....	15
2.10. SECWEB feedback.....	15
2.11. Fishn´Co feedback.....	16
2.12. Outputs of the Streamline project.....	16
2.13. Outputs of MED Bycatch project.....	16
2.14. A coordinated biological sample collection to improve important biological parameters.....	17
2.15. RCG LP and RCG Med&BS relation.....	17
3. Outcome of the NC questionnaire.....	18
4. Final discussion.....	19
5. Specific recommendations and proposal for future intersessional work.....	20
Annex I: List of Participants.....	22
Annex II: Agenda.....	24





Acronyms

BFT	Bluefin Tuna
CFA	Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture
COM	Commission
DCF	Data Collection Framework
DG MARE	Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
DLS	Data Limited Stocks
DM	Decision Meeting
ECON	Economical issues
EM	Electronic Monitoring
EMFAF	European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund
FDI	Fisheries Dependent Information
GBYP	Grande Bluefin Tuna Year Programme
ICCAT	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
ISSG	Intersessional Subgroup
JRC	Joint Research Center
LDF	Long Distance Fisheries
LM	Liaison Meeting
LP	Large Pelagics
LTPS	Linux Terminal Server Project
Med & BS	Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea
MRF	Marine Recreational Fishery
MS	Member State
NANSEA	North Atlantic, North Sea and Eastern Arctic
NC	National Correspondent
NEAFC	North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission
NWP	National Work Plan
PETS	Protected, Endangered and Threatened Species
QAF	Quality Assurance Framework
RCG	Regional Coordination Group
RDB	Regional Database
RDBES	Regional Database & Estimation System
REM	Remote Electronic Monitoring
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
RSP	Regional Sampling Plan
RWP	Regional Work Plan
SCICOM	Science Committee
SID	Stock Information Database
SG	Sub Group
SSF	Small Scale Fisheries
STECF	Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries
TAC	Total Allowable Catch



Executive summary

The Regional Coordination Group on Large Pelagics (RCG LP) held an online meeting from 15th to 17th of June 2022 to review the progress of inter-sessional work since 2021. Main areas of discussion focused on regional coordination in fisheries data collection: structure and organisation, state of play, regional sampling plans, identifying end-user needs and data quality.

Participants included scientists, experts and/or National Correspondents (NCs) from Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain, DG MARE (European Commission), ICCAT and IOTC Secretariats representatives, as end user permanent observers, and partners of DCF projects as well.

During the three days of the meeting, presentations and discussions were held regarding topics on broader DCF information and aspects directly related to RCG LP, subgroups state of play, feedback from commissions and secretariat, outputs from partners of DCF projects, coordination in biological samples collection on regional base and RCG LP moving forwards, specifically regarding the new group chairs.



I. Terms of Reference

This year, 4 major Terms of Reference (ToRs) were identified:

1. RCG LP structure, organisation and links.

The aims of this section were to present and discuss the current structure approval of the RCG LP and of each subgroup, make a status check on each subgroup and promote the possibility of the group to express suggestions improvement or modifications in the structure/organisation.

2. Available data, data transmissions and gaps.

The section deals with RFMOs feedback and summaries of possible issues, like data transmission failures or potential collaboration in data calls.

3. Regional database.

This point is related to the development of a regional database for the RCG LP. Discussions and presentation were mainly focused on the presentation of the current status of the ICES Regional Database and Estimation System (already discussed during the previous two RCG LP annual meetings).

4. Sampling and regional working plans.

This last matter continues the work initiated during the last 2020 EU-ICCAT coordination meeting and aims to provide a global overview of observer coverage by country and métier. Furthermore, discussions about the consequences and the effect of the Covid-19 epidemic (for example in our survey and consequences on the assessment associated).



2. Progress report on ToRs and work plan

2.1. Feedback from Commission on DCF

The Commission (COM) gave a presentation on the timelines for regional work plans; the points of interests for discussion at the technical RCG LP meeting and concluded with some points for general information.

In relation to regional work plans, COM highlighted the differences in the legal adoption procedure between national work plans and regional work plans. The submission of national work plans includes the submission by MS October 15th, a dialogue or *ping pong* between Commission and MS with request for modifications as per STECF experts comments normally followed by the approval and adoption process through the Commission. There is an inter-services consultation where services usually agree with (or without) comments. For NWP, the adoption legal act goes to translation but not the WP itself.

STECF EWG 21-17 commented on the timelines for regional work plans (section 3.2) and stated that “*The EWG is of the opinion that NWP should contain both national information **and** the RWP information relevant to the MS (see note under point a). This could be through a summary or references to each RWP text file for regions relevant to the MS*”. This implies that as most MS will submit a new NWP in October 2024 for adoption and implementation by 2025, the RWP has to be compiled by the RCG by June 2023 and presented during the technical meeting in June 2023 for MS to include in the NWPs. The adoption timelines of a RWP are somewhat uncertain because this process has not occurred before, but the following aspects have to be considered: If the RWP is submitted by October 2023 and there is no need for modifications by STECF, the inter-services consultation may be more difficult than in the case of single NWP, and the Commission might ask for more feedback from the RCG. There is a need for a vote in the Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture (CFA), where all MS are present and have to vote, including MS not implicated by the RWP. The legal document has to be translated in all languages. Additional delays can occur if modifications are requested by STECF/COM and these need feedback and approval from the NCs.

An alternative approach can be to agree on a RWP without legal adoption. If the RWP is not adopted by COM but agreed at RCG level, there will be two documents to testify this adoption: firstly, the RCG report, which could include the agreed RWP; and secondly the STECF EWG report, which could include the RWP. Then, if there is a need for modification arising from the STECF WP, it can still be re-evaluated by the following EWG on AR (in June 2024). In both cases, there is enough time for MS to incorporate the relevant parts of the RWP into their NWP (as STECF EWG 21-17 proposed). STECF and COM will assess the NWP, including their regional part which should mirror the RWP (already submitted and known by COM and STECF). Factors to consider when deciding on going for formal adoption or not are: the longer timelines; the less flexible nature of a RWP and the vote by the CFA. In addition, the Commission may adopt implementing acts laying down rules on procedures, cost-sharing arrangements for participation in research surveys at sea, among others but currently cost sharing agreements work without going into implementing acts.

Following an update on the regional work plan, the Commission summarised the points of interests for discussion at this technical RCG LP meeting. These includes the progress and planning for regional sampling/work plans as well as other coordinated sampling activities for large pelagics under the DCF; recreational fisheries on tuna and any updates on species selection and the way forward for this RCG on the choice of the RDB. Of importance is also the discussions on the future of this RCG, the chairing of the group and the resources allocated. For this point, the results of the NC survey were shared with group under a separate agenda point.

This points for general information from the Commission included:

- The stakeholder conference on “Taking stock of the EU Common Fisheries Policy”, took place on the 10th of June, 22. Further info, presentations and the stakeholder report are available via: [CFP Report Stakeholder Event 2022 - Info \(b2match.io\)](https://b2match.io).
- The 2022 Seminar on Fisheries Science took place on the 24 June 2022 as a hybrid event and focussed on the implementation of an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management. Event link: [Seminar on Fisheries Science – 2021 Seminar – DG MARE \(fisheriesscienceseminar.eu\)](https://fisheriesscienceseminar.eu)
- The Action Plan to conserve marine resources and protect marine ecosystems is to be launched later this summer. It aims to build bridges between the environmental and fisheries policies as a means to provide a strong contribution to the delivery on the objectives of the Biodiversity Strategy, as well as current obligations under both fisheries and environmental legislation.
- STECF new appointments are published on the STECF website.

After the presentation question was raised whether the decision making for the regional coordination groups and their work plans is made by Member states or the EU Commission has to be included and if this is same for both decision options - legal adoption and soft agreement. It was explained that it is the member states decision and they also decide whether to go with legal adoption or soft submission first to see how the decision works (learning curve) and then afterwards go for the formal adoption since the direct legal adoption can be more inflexible.

More information was asked on part of the ICCAT representative on creation of database mentioned in the presentation and what information exactly would this base consist of since ICCAT has difficulties to get data from the Data Collection for some time now, particularly the data on biological information. Answer was that there are two initiatives, one for regional database for sampling and catch which is linked with projects RDBFIS and RDBES and the other platform, the DCF where there are developments and National workplans that would be hosted on the IT platform. DG MARE is working on that with IT department. There is no further update as it is work in progress and where there are more concrete outcomes that they will share with it ICCAT. This database would be important for the end user point of view to be able to draw out the information needed and because of this it is important for DG MARE as well.

The chair asked for clarification on the creation of regional working groups and delivery of plans - in order to have regional workplan, which would be good to have for the next year, first step is to have consultation with MS which then goes to decision in September after which you can submit it to STCF for evaluation in the next year. Once it is assessed you have another year to link the regional and national work plan. This allows MS to incorporate anything agreed in the regional level in the national plan as well.

2.2. ISSG Tropical Tunas, state of play

The tropical tuna ISSG is divided in two subgroups: sub-ISSG Tropical tuna treatment (T3) and sub-ISSG Observers and the presentation was divided in those two parts.

RCG LP 2022 REPORT

Progress report on ToRs and work plan

2.2.1. Sub-ISSG Tropical Tuna Treatment (T3)

First part of the presentation reported from the sub-ISSG Tropical Tunas last hybrid meeting held in Tenerife from 25th to 27th of April 2022. The meeting report of this ISSG can be found in <https://www.fisheries-rcg.eu/rcg-lp/>

Main items and discussions of the meeting were:

- Group name and organization in the RCG LP ISSG TT.
- Discussion on the invitation to « the T3-Observer meetings » to the fishing sector or business associations to discuss monitoring methodological issues and study proposals.
- Generation of summary reports and datasets ICCAT statistical reports ICCAT IOTC statistical reports IOTC Data collection
- ObServe database update.
- Spanish National Authority Softwares (DEA and Sampling APP).
- Historical logbook data and AVDTH data set (completeness, consistency, etc.).
- On Biological data.
- TURBOBAT review on carrying capacity and vessels history. New fields.
- Port sampling coverage (numbers, areas, fishing modes, etc.)
- Improvement on Data Collection of the Faux poisson and bycatch
- Improving data collection to cover other by-catch species.
- Sale notes (completeness, consistency, etc.)
- On small tuna from Faux Poisson and by-catch in Indian and Atlantic oceans.
- Processing runs T3 Development Presentation of the first version of T3R package and demonstration. First results on comparison between T3-Fortran and T3-R runs.

On RFMO needs:

- The Fishn´Co project.
- Homogeneous and common fishery indicator of the PS and BB fleets, in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean.
- Super sampling project (Antoine Duparc-IRD).
- Correction of global PS catches by T3 as a sensitivity scenario for stock assessments.
- DCF Annual Technical Reports (UE-Tuna Fish Data Collection). Regional coordination.

After the presentation a question was raised, if observer database that was mentioned in the presentation is used by more countries than France and what is the implication for the development of the new observer database in Spain. It was replied that the current data is used from the observer programme and regarding the other data source from Spain, they are trying to connect it in real time with the dataset from the electronical logbook, but it is still work in progress.

2.2.2. Sub-ISSG Observers

The second part of the presentation reported from the Sub-ISSG Observers meeting held in Tenerife from 28th to 29th of April. The first part of that meeting was an update of observer programmes and perspectives with main points being: ObServe database update, comments on RFMOs template for the coordination, development of tools producing automatic data reports, marine mammals and seabirds tracking, perspectives

RCG LP 2022 REPORT

Progress report on ToRs and work plan

of data collection on board and biological sampling and tagging programmes on board of which two most notable are Tuna biology (AZTI) and Length-weight relationship of bycatch species (IRD). This was followed by common methods and tools for data collection where main points of discussion were observers' programs 2021 coverage with two types of programs conducted by the Spanish fleet: DCF program conducted by national observers (AZTI + IEO), and private programs (Best practices and ICCAT Moratoria) with both national and regional observers and electronic monitoring (EM) as a complement to human observations. There was also a mentioning on updates for new species and current species checklist, update of ObServe protocol/manual, regional coordination and synchronisation tools (referential updating for species and vessels) and a review on standard measures for by-catch species groups. On the second day of the meeting, the main topics related to the OBSERVE database and associated tools with new version and perspectives and verification programme. This was followed by a review of Electronic Monitoring program of France and Spain and data analysis of studies in progress (Whale sharks and Marine mammals, Abundance OCS, biodiversity...).

The meeting report of this ISSG can be found in <https://www.fisheries-rcg.eu/rcg-lp/>

2.3. ISSG Longlines fisheries outside Mediterranean Sea, state of play

A brief and general presentation was made about countries, areas and species involved in EU longline fisheries outside the Mediterranean Sea. The ISSG consists of EU longline fleets in Atlantic Ocean (Portugal and Spain), Indian Ocean (France, Portugal and Spain) and Pacific Ocean (Portugal and Spain) and the group noted that the structure is fine. Nevertheless, the ISSG is not operational yet, few people have been signed up to participate and it was pointed out that it would be important that more people of each EU country involved in this fishery participate in the ISSG.

Tasks from 2021 remain for the year 2022 since the group is not yet operational. One of the first issues to address by the group is the lack of discard data reported by CPCs. It is suggested that RCG LP should identify the problem and find the solutions. ICCAT noted that discards (dead discards and live releases) are more and more important for assessing stock status and discard reports are part of many RFMO's recommendations. CPCs are required to provide this information to ICCAT and IOTC which have difficulties in estimating it.

The second task for the group is to address the recommendation made by the group in 2021 on the increase of number of participants in this ISSG. This recommendation is also valid for almost all the other ISSGs and transversal topics like the development of the RCG LP database.

The Group agreed that a good start would be to contact the NCs that are part of the subgroup and ask them for the relevant scientists or at least one representative of the MS that could participate in the work of the subgroup and start the conversation on what could be done for the group and what would be the first step to start. It could be important to find one person who would be in a lead position to launch this kind of communication. The experts of all three MS of this ISSG agreed on having a consultation and explaining this issue to NCs to see if it is possible to move forward.

2.4. ISSG Mediterranean Sea large pelagics fisheries, state of play

As with the previous ISSG, a brief presentation was made with an introduction of the countries, their experts and species involved followed by the main current issues being observers on board - there is an extreme need, especially for swordfish, to collect data on discards directly on board (i.e undersized fish), both for dead and

RCG LP 2022 REPORT

Progress report on ToRs and work plan

alive fish. However, the lack of this data due to small vessels that are hard to board properly affects uncertainty for swordfish stock assessment due to the great influence on the recruitment and total catches. The second issue is the possible discrepancies in swordfish measurements protocols regarding straight and curved lower jaw fork length.

Note was made about this presentations link with a presentation on the Streamline project and that discussion about this issue can be done in more details after both presentations were finished.

Regarding the two experts commissioned from ICCAT to coordinate research to find new conversion factors for the possible discrepancy mentioned above it was commented that at this moment there are several groups of observers taking both measures to make this correlation and the ICCAT secretariat has made some effort so in that regard there will be some results during the next species group meeting.

RCG LP Specific recommendations and proposal for future intersessional work

ISSG Mediterranean Sea Large Pelagic Fisheries

Ref. to large_pelagic_2021_r04: Use the standard measure for swordfish amending current observer manuals

Ref. to large_pelagic_2021_r03: Increase number of participants in RCG LP ISSGs

- Two experts commissioned from ICCAT to coordinate research to find new conversion factors for the possible discrepancy.
- At this moment there are several groups of observers taking both measures (curved and straight) to make this correlation and there will be some results during the next species group meeting.
- Clear focus for the ISSG to cooperate on, issue remains on how to find human resources? ISSG BFT and LP Fisheries share majority of experts.

11

2.5. ISSG Bluefin tuna, state of play

***Careful with the discussion here because it is a touchy subject between Commission and ICCAT. It is unclear and both sides need to approve it before putting anything public.**

As an introduction, a presentation was made to explain the structure of the subgroup and how it is not functional yet. Despite this these remarks several issues were raised for the 2022 meeting:

- It is necessary to have a clear view of what is sampled by DCF and what by GBYP to avoid double funding of similar sampling activities as well as to plan future activities.
- Regarding future sampling activities, organization of a workshop on sampling aspects promoted by GBYP?
- Final note connected with ISSG Mediterranean Sea Large Pelagic Fisheries - general poor quality of data on bycatch from LL operating on bluefin tuna.

It was noted what has not been mentioned in the presentation is that GBYP was to draft a datacall for DCF so that they could have actual overview on what has been collected from MS. There are currently strong efforts from GBYP to try and recover data for the year 2022 but it is uncertain that all the data will be collected, particularly the biological information data since some institutes that were involved in this biological sampling are not participating any more so the data from them is not available. It was also added that the bycatch data from the longliners in BFT fishery should be taken more seriously and that it is an issue at this time. It could be something that DGMARE and ICCAT should work together to try and improve the situation and to see why the information seems lacking for ICCAT.

RCG LP 2022 REPORT

Progress report on ToRs and work plan

Previous chair of RCG Med & BS noted that any recommendations regarding the large pelagic fisheries were left aside for the RCG LP and this made some trouble for some recommendations made from Med & BS, as they had to exclude the LP fisheries from those recommendations.

On the topic on bycatch in the Mediterranean it was accepted by RCG Med&BS to follow FAO methodology on scientific monitoring of bycatch which does not exclude LP and this group needs to decide if it will follow this methodology. This is a very important decision to have higher estimates of bycatch rate.

Discussion continued about consideration from GBYP to promote a specific data call but to follow the workplan first intention would be to organise workshop for all countries with BFT fisheries in order to get an overview and in the framework of the workshop it could be discussed the necessity of launching specific data call on biological data on BFT. This was all delayed by covid pandemic.

Franco Biagi asked about the availability of the biological data collected by GBYP in the past year to which Francisco Alemany answered that summary of the tables on biological sampling carried out under GBYP is publicly available and is presented every year and it is included in the GBYP report submitted to the EU. He continued that his is going to be the core of the future database on biological data and intention is to also gather the information collected by the MS and try to build up a common shared database.

Antonio DiNatale added that the main problem is that GBYP tried to attain the biological info collected by the MS within DCF, like biological sampling carried every three years for data on maturity, ageing but even the list of this data is not available at this moment.

Franco Biagi clarified that he asked whether this information was made available and included in any report of RCG LP report and if it is not, it would be useful to have this kind of table in there. Francisco (ICCAT) answered that this info is publicly available in EU portals as a meta data however the current format is probably hard to obtain and manage this information and this meta data could be made more use friendly.

Both Franco and Francisco agreed that these issues mentioned in this discussion are probably due to the coordination. Francisco added that the effort should be made to have this information in the common database so it can be used properly and that is why ICCAT secretariat launched initiative of creating a new database that includes not only effort and catch data but also biological data.

The data call should be a possible solution to get the necessary data however experts should wait for the workshop and discuss the needs of the data call there first. Communication should be established between the RCG and ICCAT, to clearly establish the need of ICCAT as an end user and what needs to be done from the part of the RCG LP as a representative of the MS collecting the data to fill the gaps that have been created up to this date. Future workshop should be a proper starting point to start solving this issue that was discussed here.

RCG LP Specific recommendations and proposal for future intersessional work

ISSG Bluefin tuna

It was accepted to follow FAO methodology on scientific monitoring of bycatch in MED which does not exclude LP and this group needs to decide if it will follow this methodology. This is a very important decision to have higher estimates of bycatch rate and any recommendations in RCG Med&BS regarding the large pelagic fisheries were left aside for the RCG LP.

There is a need to progress the work on a regional sampling plan for the large pelagic in Med&BS. Good opportunity is to organize a joint session with RCG Med&BS to further discuss this cooperation.

ICCAT noted that feedback for the end user should be listened when having this meeting - SCRS or ICCAT secretariat will be noted and invited if sampling plans for LP are going to be discussed.

- Communication should be established between the RCG and ICCAT, to clearly establish the need of ICCAT as an end user and what needs to be done from the part of the RCG LP as a representative of the MS collecting the data to fill the gaps that have been created up to this date.
- GBYP is considering promoting a specific data call in the future but to follow their workplan, which was delayed by Covid pandemic, first intention is to organise workshop for all countries with BFT fisheries in order to get a full overview.
- RCG LP is to participate and in the framework of the workshop the necessity of launching a specific data call on biological data on BFT could be discussed.

Ref. to large_pelagic_2021_rec06 on communication with ICCAT to specify required data for the recreational fisheries.

- There is no need for this recommendation as it is clear what data should be collected (Task 1 Task 2).
- However, there are doubts regarding biological data that is not yet compulsory. There is not a clear sampling plan decided by SCRS and because of that the before mentioned workshop will be the place to agree on that.

2.6. ISSG Baitboat/pole and line, state of play

A brief and general presentation was made about countries, areas and species involved in EU longline fisheries outside the Mediterranean Sea. The ISSG consists of EU longline fleets in Atlantic Ocean (Portugal and Spain), Indian Ocean (France, Portugal and Spain) and Pacific Ocean (Portugal and Spain). As with the other ISSGs, this group is not fully operational yet with few people signed up to participate. There were two notes to mention for 2022: About progress in coordination on effort sampling and analysis protocols performed and on the received expert support for the elaboration of standardised CPUEs for each fleet or for all the joint baitboat fisheries in the area.

2.7. ISSG RDB (Regional Data Base)

Mathieu presented the outcome of the ISSG work on a regional data base for Large Pelagics and presented four possible scenarios for the RCG LP regional database. Almost all MS involved in the RCG LP are represented in the ISSG. Additionally, end-users like the regional fisheries management organisations, fisheries dependent information expert and other experts involved in the RDBES and the RDBFIS projects as well as

RCG LP 2022 REPORT

Progress report on ToRs and work plan

the European Commission attended the ISSG meeting. The goals of the 2022 work were to identify the needs and specificities of each stakeholder and to define a roadmap, with clear proposals for the next steps. The group agreed with the aims and the benefits of the development of an LP RDB and it was clear for all that to reach any regionalization goal, the data store in the RDB must be at high spatial and temporal resolution (for example at full latitude and longitude scale). Developing a brand-new system from scratch was not considered a good option. Regarding the preference on the kind of existing system to invest in, the RCG LP countries are divided, and no clear consensus raised in the discussion so far. However, to reach the final goal one must consider all the global needs and specificities of the RCG LP, and a solution might be to define a synergy between the RDBES and the RDBFIS regarding the LP.

Based on a support document, which summarises all LP RDB requirements, the next step should be to organise another one day or half-day meeting before the RCG LP 2022 annual meeting, to move forward in the groups reflexions and present the outcomes during this RCG LP plenary meeting (planned at the middle of June). The end goal would be to formulate a concrete recommendation regarding the LP RDB development. A full summary of this ISSG work can be found in <https://www.fisheries-rcg.eu/rcg-lp/>.

Following the ISSG presentation, RCG members discussed whether all the MS could agree on one scenario.

Carlos Palma from an end user position stated that all 4 presented scenarios pose problems to the end user level and how to transfer the info from one database to another, how the countries are going to prepare the information to be absorbed by both systems. And all 4 will be hard to implement. In the future it should be considered to use “FLUX” fisheries language for universal exchange, between the provider and the final consumer. This belongs to the UN. ICCAT is incorporating this, it is something new and it is starting to be adopted in many countries. It is a language that allows the exchange of any type of information or different domains of information that can be transferred from one place to another. It should be checked and considered if there are elements there that should be incorporated in infrastructure that is used. This should be considered in the next meeting of the ISSG.

In the end, the group couldn't find the solution and collective consensus for this so no decision or recommendation was made at the meeting.

2.8. ICCAT feedback

ICCAT provided feedback on data needs and gaps regarding LP data, feedback on the data transmission of the EU Member States, the structure of data reporting (Task 1, Task 2 and Task 3) and how this links to the need of SCRS. Further details were provided on the GBYP biological sampling and the importance of alignment between DCF and GBYP emphasised, the plans for the ICCAT biological database were also presented. Antonio DiNatale recommended to colleagues to submit the data about recreational/sports & artisanal fisheries to the ICCAT secretariat and their total catches and total removals so that they are accounted for. This data was and still is collected in pilot projects in some MS as it was obligation from ICCAT.

Leonie O'Dowd had a question on the GBYP database and if at this moment it is only biological samples for BFT or if there are biological samples for other species and if it is, how ICCAT deals with the data on other species for biological sampling. ICCAT representatives answered that they were focused on BFT and that the core of the future database will be the data that they already have on BFT. The view is that the aim in the

RCG LP 2022 REPORT

Progress report on ToRs and work plan

future is to include all the ICCAT species in this ICCAT database. BFT and swordfish are used as reference species and other species are going to be included after the design is finished.

Leonie had quick follow up question on the biological data collection between GBYP and DCF, since they are complementing each other, if there is a plan in the future to discontinue some of the data collection under GBYP if it is already been collected by DCF. Francisco Alemany answered that once the new database is completed new ICCAT forms will be created to request this data from the MS. GBYP was created in 2010 to fill the gap since there weren't precise information on what portion of the samples have been analysed and with obtained results. So, the workshop is to gather the results from sampling. Final goal is to optimize the sampling to be sure that GBYP is complementary to the DCF and once all the data is gathered the plan will be made what would be the minimal sampling for each area and to design new sampling scheme. In the future CPS should take care of the basic sampling and GBYP is going to take focus on specific studies and sampling. The basic sampling is the responsibility of MS, so the system is optimized as much as possible.

Franco Biagi made a general remark that we should make a clear distinction between data information and biological sampling. For DG MARE, it is important to avoid duplication both in funding and sampling and what is mandatory collected in DCF must be discontinued in GBYP. What is not covered by DCF, GBYP should take care of and we should be very vigilant in this respect. Francisco confirmed that GBYP role is to take care of very special and specific issues and routine samples should be responsibility of the CPC's. And if GBYP was doing some "routine" sampling it was to fill the gaps because some biological samples like the otoliths were not provided so GBYP assumed this role.

2.9. IOTC feedback

The IOTC secretariat (Cynthia Fernandez Diaz) summarised the data needs and gaps regarding LP data under the mandate of IOTC. In addition, Cynthia provided an overview of catch trends with focus on EU contributions, and listed the reporting requirements according to resolutions 15/01 and 15/02 and the resolution on observer data. She also informed on a revised data submission cycle and the compliance card with a summary of the main data reporting issues by the EU, including late reporting, lack of size frequency data and inconsistent or not raised discard data. For 2020 in particular, coverage was lower in most cases due to covid and size frequency data sets were worse than previous years. The RCG Secretariat had a general reflection that hopefully there will be good communication and open channel between RCG secretariat and IOTC on which IOTC agreed.

2.10. SECWEB feedback

Presentation was made on the developing mechanisms to support the planning and execution of administrative tasks of RCGs by SECWEB with the aim to establish a long-term supportive structure.

Mathieu asked if it is possible to put new reports and documents regarding work in ISSG somewhere in the RCG website? SECWEB representatives answered that at the moment there is no particular repository but this is something that should definitely be addressed by the Secretariat. Further suggestions about the website will be taken in consideration and added that new section is being developed for the ISSG and there the new reports should be accommodated. Consultation have been launched, but only for some RCGs at this moment.

2.11. Fishn'Co feedback

There was a concise presentation by Mathieu Depetris about the state of play of the Fishn'Co project especially regarding the RCG LP and its regional work plan. Due to lack of human resources in RCG LP there was reduction of the original work planned to only focus on one LP fishery which is tropical tunas purse seine fleet which only concerns 3 member states – France, Spain and Portugal. Since they have a long-time coordination, this seemed like a good start to create a case study that could be an example for other LP fisheries. The idea is to integrate templates from national work plans and RCG NANSEA and Baltic into this RWP and then do test runs with this concept with a plan to finish in 2025-2027.

2.12. Outputs of the Streamline project

The Streamline project was presented by the project coordinator Alessandro Ligas, Streamline is a sister project of the Fishn'Co project to provide support for the development and drafting of a regional work plan for the Mediterranean and Black Sea, focussing on different aspects of the data collection, including sampling of commercial fisheries, SSCF, recreational fisheries and bycatch. The project organised workshops on bycatch and recreational and identified fisheries under specific risks such as drifting longlines for potential bycatch sampling plan. Difficult to implement observer programmes on small vessels and alternative approaches were also reviewed such as self-sampling approaches and CCTV cameras. Important to have common discussions with the aim to create synergies and avoid duplication across RCGs.

Antonio DiNatale commented how synergies instead of overlapping need to exist between Fishn'Co and other RFMOs, particularly with ICCAT. This is especially important for the Black Sea where BFT is returning so it is important to find synergies between regional coordination groups so the information is not lost. As an example - small tuna caught in small pelagic fishery in Black Sea and it is not certain if ICCAT is getting this information. Alessandro Ligas confirmed that the goal is not to duplicate the data that already exist but to improve the quality of the data that would be available to the end users. It was noted by the group that report on the bycatch of sharks and sea turtles can be really challenging for the observer and the data gathered is mostly incomplete since boarding on the small vessels has more than one serious issue. Franco Biagi noted that the group has to keep in mind that scientific observer and control observer are not the same thing and that there should be a distinction.

Franco Biagi asked if there was any meta analysis for impact of different metiers (longline targeting swo, bft or albacore) on the different protective species. And if there isn't if there is something envisioned in the future? Alessandro answered that regarding the meta analyses there wasn't any and perhaps it could be done in the future after enough data is collected.

2.13. Outputs of MED Bycatch project

There was a presentation about the first results from the MedBycatch project on mitigation trials in South Adriatic pelagic longlines. An introduction to this fishery and fleet was followed by results of bycatch monitoring from 2019 to 2021 and specific information on longlines and hooks used in this fishery. Testing and

RCG LP 2022 REPORT

Progress report on ToRs and work plan

results of two types of mitigation was presented, one of the circle hooks and second mitigation was change of fishing strategy. Conclusion for these trials were that South Adriatic is a key area for the blue shark bycatch phenomenon in the longline targeting swordfish, especially so when the bait is mackerel, their catch survival was more than 90% with circular hooks not affecting quantitative bycatch but rather the catch condition. Regarding fishing strategy (day – night time) it seems to have great quantitative impact on the bycatch but there is also a significant reduction of the target catch and these preliminary results warrant further trial implementation.

In the discussion that followed, Antonio Di Natale asked if there was any other bycatch collected except the blue shark and if there were included in calculation and if the J-hooks used are smaller than typical J-hooks usually used for SWO?

Pierluigi answered that there were other bycatch species - *Caretta caretta* and *Pteropteryblabla violacea* and they were recorded but BSH data was presented because the mitigation trial was based on this bycatch. The J-hook used in this south Adriatic fishery is smaller than in other places for SWO fishery and it is because the perception of the fishermen that this does not influence the catches and they could change the size of the hook.

Franco Biagi asked about J hook vs circle hook, and clarification on what is the retention of these hooks and what is the difference in bycatch average between hooks, whether there is significant difference? It was answered that there is no difference in the quantity caught, and the significant difference is in the condition of the caught fish. Franco underlined that one analysis indicates that the circle hook provides more healthy release specimens but with J hooks more than 90% released animals were alive. And that these two elements seem conflicting and it could be taken out of the context.

17

2.14. A coordinated biological sample collection to improve important biological parameters

Group commented that this sampling needs to be complimented by other older samplings that have been made and that reference should be made with older DCF or GBYP sampling to see if those samples can be used for this study.

2.15. RCG LP and RCG Med&BS relation

Short presentation talked about connections between two RCGs in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region followed by a group discussion. The general thought of the RCG LP is that Med&BS LP are special fisheries and should be followed by single RCG and not joined with the RCG Med&BS but rather be in touch with it.

3. Outcome of the NC questionnaire

A questionnaire was launched by COM to national correspondents on matters relating to the DCF. There were specific questions in relation to the continuation of this RCG in its current form and the resources allocated to the functioning of the group (e.g. chairing etc). Italy and Portugal representatives said that they will take note of this questionnaire as they did not make any input until the meeting.

The majority of the ones that participated in the questionnaire expressed that they want to continue with the work of the coordination group how it was up until now. Consensus has not been made but we need to decide on the future direction for the group that we can present it to the NCs so they can make the decision. An agreed way forward is needed for the (co)chairing of the group.

In case one MS cannot chair the designated year, they can swap but it is responsibility of that MS to find the replacement chair among other MS, this approach is used in RCG Med&BS. This was accepted by majority of MS present in the DM 2022.

Script scenario 1 to select a MS to (co)chair this RCG by a two year- rotation is the most simple and transparent so it should be the best solution and it was decided to run a script to choose the future chairs (first one only for one year).

Since no chairs were appointed in 2022 for 2023, the proposition to run a script during the Decision Meeting to randomly determine the future chairs and rotation was selected as this was deemed the simplest and most transparent solution.

The results from running the script:

RCG LP CHAIRING SCHEDULE			
	YEAR	CHAIR	CO-CHAIR
1st rotation	2023	Ireland*	Malta
	2024	Malta	Portugal
	2025	Portugal	Cyprus
	2026	Cyprus	Greece
	2027	Greece	Italy
	2028	Italy	France
	2029	France	Spain
	2030	Spain	Croatia
	2031	Croatia	Ireland

**First Chair only one year to resume the cycle*

4. Final discussion

NCs need to decide on the next chair, it is not a recommendation. All the group agrees to this and it changed to decision based on majority.

For the Rec 2 on the lack of the human resources.

Franco Biagi mentioned that in the view of supporting the group there may be a possibility for EC to appoint the expert to help with the work of the group.

Leonie O'Dowd added that it needs to be reviewed whether there is a clear objective or advantage that MS sees in working together in the particular area of some ISSG in order to reduce the work burden, to facilitate the work rather than seeing it as an extra burden for the work. She suggested to review the ISSGs to see if the work is too ambitious to keep them all running and if they have clear objectives and tasks laid out for them.

There is a need to progress the work on a regional sampling plan for the large pelagic in Med&BS. Good opportunity is to organize a joint session during their annual meeting to further discuss this cooperation. Francisco Alemany added that feedback for the end user should be listened when having that meeting, so someone from SCRS or ICCAT secretariat should be invited if sampling plans for LP are going to be discussed.

There was a question if anything is provided about end user needs for the species in recreational fisheries for the recommendation from the previous years? Antonio answered that this catches, from rec&sports fisheries are equivalent for other catches for ICCAT. So, task 1 data total catch and task 2 data size frequencies are the minimum request to be fulfilled and are mandatory. Additional information would be very useful as well. Francisco said that there are only doubts regarding biological data that are not yet compulsory. There is not a clear sampling plan decided by SCRS and because of that the before mentioned workshop will be the place to agree on that. To conclude it seems there is no need for this recommendation as it is clear what should be collected but there still questions asked about it. So, it should be mentioned at the Liaison meeting in front of ICCAT.

5. Specific recommendations and proposal for future intersessional work

RCG LP SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSAL FOR FUTURE INTERSESSIONAL WORK

ISSG Mediterranean Sea Large Pelagic Fisheries

Ref. to large_pelagic_2021_r04: Use the standard measure for swordfish amending current observer manuals

Ref. to large_pelagic_2021_r03: Increase number of participants in RCG LP ISSGs

- Two experts commissioned from ICCAT to coordinate research to find new conversion factors for the possible discrepancy.
- At this moment there are several group of observers taking both measures (curved and straight) to make this correlation and there will be some results during the next species group meeting.
- Clear focus for the ISSG to cooperate on, issue remains on how to find human resources? ISSG BFT and LP Fisheries share majority of experts.

RCG LP SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSAL FOR FUTURE INTERSESSIONAL WORK

ISSG Bluefin tuna

- It was accepted to follow FAO methodology on scientific monitoring of bycatch in MED which does not exclude LP and this group needs to decide if it will follow this methodology. This is a very important decision to have higher estimates of bycatch rate and any recommendations in RCG MED&BS regarding the large pelagic fisheries were left aside for the RCG LP.
- There is a need to progress the work on a regional sampling plan for the large pelagic in MED&BS. Good opportunity is to organize a joint session with RCG MED&BS to further discuss this cooperation.
- ICCAT noted that feedback for the end user should be listened when having this meeting - SCRS or ICCAT secretariat will be noted and invited if sampling plans for LP are going to be discussed.



RCG LP SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSAL FOR FUTURE INTERSESSIONAL WORK

ISSG Bluefin tuna

- Communication should be established between the RCG and ICCAT, to clearly establish the need of ICCAT as an end user and what needs to be done from the part of the RCG LP as a representative of the MS collecting the data to fill the gaps that have been created up to this date.
- GBYP is considering promoting a specific data call in the future but to follow their workplan, which was delayed by Covid pandemic, first intention is to organise workshop for all countries with BFT fisheries in order to get a full overview.
- RCG LP is to participate and in the framework of the workshop the necessity of launching a specific data call on biological data on BFT could be discussed.

Ref. to [large_pelagic_2021_rec06](#) on communication with ICCAT to specify required data for the recreational fisheries.

- There is no need for this recommendation as it is clear what data should be collected (Task 1 Task 2).
- However there are doubts regarding biological data that is not yet compulsory. There is not a clear sampling plan decided by SCRS and because of that the before mentioned workshop will be the place to agree on that.



Annex I: List of Participants

Country	Name	Email	Role
HR	Josip Males	males@izor.hr	RCG chair
IT	Adriano Mariani	a.mariani@unimar.it	RCG expert;
ES	Aída Parejo	aida.parejo@ieo.csic.es	RCG expert;
IT	Alessandro Ligas	ligas@cibm.it	Project coordinator
FR	Antoine Duparc	antoine.duparc@ird.fr	RCG expert;
IT	Antonio Di Natale		
	Carlos Mayor de Pablo	carlos.mayor@iccat.int	ICCAT, end user
	Carlos Palma	carlos.palma@iccat.int	ICCAT, end user
PT	Cristina Rosa	croso@dgrm.mm.gov.pt	National correspondent
	Cynthia Fernandez Diaz	Cynthia.FernandezDiaz@fao.org	IOTC, end user
PT	Dália Reis	Dalia.CC.Reis@azores.gov.pt	RCG expert;
ES	David Macías	david.macias@ieo.csic.es	RCG expert;
ES	Enrique Rodríguez Marin	enrique.rmarin@ieo.csic.es	RCG expert;
	Francisco Alemany	francisco.alemany@iccat.int	ICCAT, end user
EU	Franco Biagi	Franco.Biagi@ec.europa.eu	DG MARE
IT	Fulvio Garibaldi	Fulvio.Garibaldi@unige.it	RCG expert;
GR	George Tserpes	gtserpes@hcmr.gr	RCG expert;
IE	Hugo Maxwell	Hugo.Maxwell@Marine.ie	RCG expert;
ES	Iker Zudaire	izudaire@azti.es	RCG expert;
CY	Ioannis Thasitis	IThasitis@dfmr.moa.gov.cy	RCG expert;
HR	Ivana Vukov	ivana.vukov@mps.hr	National correspondent
ES	Jon Ruiz Gondra	jruiz@azti.es	RCG expert;
ES	Jose Carlos Baez	josecarlos.baez@ieo.csic.es	RCG expert;
ES	Jose Fernández Costa	jose.costa@ieo.csic.es	RCG expert;
GR	Kostas Katsafaros	kkatsafaros@minagric.gr	National correspondent
EU	Leonie O'Dowd	Leonie.O'DOWD@ec.europa.eu	DG MARE
IT	Luigi Pappalardo	luigi.pappalardo86@gmail.com	

RCG LP 2022 REPORT

Annex I: List of Participants

Country	Name	Email	Role
FR	Mathieu Depetris	mathieu.depétris@ird.fr	RCG expert;
FR	Pascal Cauquil	pascal.cauquil@ird.fr	RCG expert;
ES	Pedro Pascual	pedro.pascual@ieo.csic.es	RCG expert;
IT	Pierluigi Carbonara	carbonara@coispa.it	RCG expert;
ES	Ricard Buxo	rbuxo@mapa.es	RCG expert;
ES	Rosa Fernández	rfernandez@cetmar.org	RCGs Secretariat
ES	Secretaría General de Pesca	sgprotec@mapa.es	RCG expert;
ES	Susana Rivero Rodríguez	srivero@cetmar.es	RCGs Secretariat
FR	Tristan Rouyer	tristan.rouyer@ifremer.fr	RCG expert;
ES	Victoria Ortiz de Zarate	victoria.zarate@ieo.csic.es	RCG expert;

Annex II: Agenda



Preliminary agenda

RCG LP, virtual meeting 15th-17th of June 2022 (Brussels Time)

Meeting is going to be recorded for the making of RCG LP 2022 Annual Report

24

Date	Time (CET, Brussels Time)	Duration	Subject	Details	Presenter(s)
First day 15/06/2022	9:30	30min	Testing		
	10:00	30min	Welcome and introduction	Welcome, house rules, adoption of the agenda, report format, brief round table	RCG chairs
	10:30	15min	Feedback from Commission on DCF	Cover of some broader DCF information and some aspects directly related to the RCG LP	Leonie O'Dowd
		15min	Discussion in plenary		
	11:00	30min	ISSG Tropical Tunas	State of play sub-ISSG Tropical Tunas and sub-ISSG Observers, last meeting report	To define

RCG LP 2022 REPORT

Annex II: Agenda

	30min	Discussion in plenary		
12:00	60min	Lunch		
13:00	25min	ISSG Longlines fisheries outside Mediterranean Sea	State of play	To define
	20min	Discussion in plenary		
13:45	15min	ISSG Mediterranean Sea large pelagics fisheries	State of play	To define
	15min	Discussion in plenary		
14:15	15min	ISSG Bluefin tuna	State of play	To define
	15min	Discussion in plenary		
14:45	15min	Coffee break		
15:00	15min	ISSG Baitboat/pole and line	State of play	To define
	15min	Discussion in plenary		
15:30	30min	ISSG RDB	State of play, progress	Mathieu Depetris
	30min	Discussion in plenary		
16:30		End of the day		

25

Second day 16/06/2022	9:30	30min	Testing and discussion		
	10:00	15min	ICCAT feedback	Summarise of data needs and gaps regarding LP data	To define
		15min	Discussion in plenary		
	10:30	15min	IOTC feedback	Summarise of data needs and gaps regarding LP data	To define

RCG LP 2022 REPORT

Annex II: Agenda

	15min	Discussion in plenary		
11:00	15min	Secweb feedback	State of play	To define
	15min	Discussion in plenary		
11:30	15min	Fishn'Co feedback	State of play	Mathieu Depetris
	15min	Discussion in plenary		
12:00	60min	Lunch		
13:00	15min	Outputs of STREAMLINE project	Proposal of a regional work plan on the monitoring of PETs incidental bycatch in drifting longline fisheries in the Mediterranean	To define
	30min	Discussion in plenary		
13:45	15min	Outputs of MedBYCATCH project	Mitigation actions of the bycatch in the context of swordfish pelagic longline fishery	To define
	30min	Discussion in plenary		
14:30	15min	Med&BS Regional Progress in regards to RCG LP	Sampling in commercial and recreational fishing, incidental bycatch, Med Database	To define
14:45	75min	Discussion in plenary		
16:00		End of the day		

26

Third day 17/06/2022	9:30	30min	Testing and discussion	
	10:00	15min	Feedback on the DCF questionnaire relating RCG LP	General issues, RCG LP chairing, regional database etc. Leonie O'Dowd
		30min	Discussion in plenary	
	10:45	75min	RCG LP moving forward	Relation with other RCG mainly RCG Med&BS, discussion about common Rules of Procedures change for chairing

RCG LP 2022 REPORT

Annex II: Agenda

			Discussion in plenary
12:00	60min		Lunch time
13:00	60min		Continuation of discussion and Next step definition
14:00	30min		Open discussion to other mathers
14:30	30min		RCG LP 2022, venue and chairs
15:00			End of the meeting