



International Game Fish Association

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Proposed CITES Listing for Bluefin Tuna

Position Statement
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On October 14, 2009 the Principality of Monaco tabled a proposal to have an Appendix I listing of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Flora and Fauna (CITES) for Atlantic bluefin tuna. A CITES listing for bluefin would effectively prohibit international trade of the species but would still allow commercial fishermen to fish for and sell bluefin domestically. However, during the long awaited meeting that recently took place in Doha, Qatar in March, 72 out of 129 CITES members voted against a CITES listing for bluefin. Forty-three members voted in favor of the listing and 14 abstained.

Overfished for decades and with stocks depleted by as much as 75%, bluefin tuna sadly bear an uncanny resemblance to other species that are now extinct. Management of this iconic species falls under the purview of the International Commission for the Conservation of Tuna (ICCAT). Yet, despite the organization's ironic name, ICCAT has proven itself incapable of properly managing this species even when repeatedly presented with credible science indicating that is severely overfished.

Bluefin's imperiled status coupled with ICCAT's management track record prompted Monaco's proposal for a CITES listing. The proposal got backing from several countries who also feared that an international trade ban would be the only chance to halt the rampant overfishing that bluefin is experiencing. However, support for the proposal was weakened by lobbying from Japan and several Arab countries. Japan imports nearly 80% of Atlantic bluefin tuna harvested and publicly expressed before the final vote that it would not comply with a CITES listing, if passed.

With the ball back in ICCAT's court, bluefin tuna's future is uncertain, at best. This species' survival again rests on ICCAT's ability to heed the advice of the scientific community and implement and enforce catch limits that will end overfishing and allow stock rebuilding. Should the necessary steps to properly protect Atlantic bluefin tuna by ICCAT not be implemented immediately, the IGFA would strongly support another attempt to list with CITES.