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Why are urgent, radical measures necessary to ensure the survival of Mediterranean and East Atlantic bluefin tuna?

(Why IUCN members must vote for CGR4.MOT038, 'Action for the recovery of eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna')

- Bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean and East Atlantic is in crisis, close to collapse, and a symbol of society's failure to manage global fisheries – driven to the brink by mismanagement, massive overfishing, disregard for quotas, huge fleet overcapacity, illegal fishing, and unreported catch.
- ICCAT (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, the regional fisheries management body tasked with sustainably managing this fishery) has failed to heed the repeated warnings of the scientific and conservationist communities alike that collapse is now likely.
- ICCAT's own scientific committee published on 3 October 2008 its most damning assessment yet of the state of eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna:
 - that actual annual catch is likely double total allowable catch (61,000 tonnes as opposed to 28,500 tonnes) and over four times the level deemed sustainable by the scientists,
 - that only 36% of the fragile spawning biomass is left compared to 30 years ago.
- Scientists therefore recommend bold management overhaul to save bluefin from collapse:
 - extend closed season to cover main spawning period of May and June,
 - cut total allowable catch to between 12,500 tonnes and 15,000 tonnes,
 - impose bold time-area closures.
- An independent expert review of ICCAT – commissioned by the organization itself – considers the eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna fishery an “international disgrace” and a “travesty of fisheries management”. The experts recommend an immediate closure of the fishery by ICCAT – until a management plan is put in place that follows scientific advice, including the closure of all key spawning areas (of which the Balearic Sea is the most important).
- WWF has recently published reports on Mediterranean bluefin tuna, emphasising the crisis:
 - ‘Lifting the lid on Italy’s bluefin tuna fishery’ (10-2008) and ‘The plunder of bluefin tuna’ (6-2008) highlighting extensive illegal activity around the Mediterranean,
 - ‘Race for the last bluefin’ (3-2008) showing that industrial fleets are twice as big as quotas dictate.
- WWF therefore calls on all members of IUCN to vote for motion CGR4.MOT038, ‘Action for the recovery of eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna’ – urging ICCAT to do the right thing, and impose a sustainable recovery and management plan for Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna. Before it's too late.

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