



Frequently Asked Questions

Click on the headings to jump to that particular section

1. [Global Trade Analysis Questions](#)
2. [General Bluefin Questions](#)
3. [ICCAT Questions](#)
4. [Italian Driftnet Questions](#)

GLOBAL TRADE ANALYSIS

1. Q: What is this trade analysis, and why was it needed?

A: This analysis is a comprehensive picture of the international trade in the northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna, conducted by Roberto Mielgo Bregazzi, an independent bluefin tuna expert based in Madrid. Mielgo used a methodology that he developed to compare the amount of bluefin tuna actually traded on the global market, to the amount that should be traded, based on official catch limits, also known as quotas, which are set by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). The Pew Environment Group commissioned the report to examine if recent management and compliance measures adopted by ICCAT have been effective in reducing the amount of illegal and unreported bluefin tuna being caught in the northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea.

2. Q: How was the analysis conducted?

A: The author compiled official trade data from sources around the world, including import and export data from the European Union, United States, Japan and Croatia. He then converted this import and export data into 'wild round weight' -i.e., the weight of a fish when it was caught- using various industry-accepted conversion factors. This information was then compared to official ICCAT 'adjusted' quotas (quantified in metric tons of 'wild round weight') in order to quantify the amount of bluefin tuna caught in excess of yearly quotas set by ICCAT.

3. Q: What were the results of the analysis?

A: The analysis found that even as bluefin tuna quotas have decreased in recent years and overall catch is declining, the gap between the amount of Mediterranean tuna allowed to be caught, and the amount of tuna actually caught and traded, has increased significantly.

- In 2008, the amount of Mediterranean bluefin tuna traded on the global market was 31 percent higher than the quota.
- In 2010, that percentage grew to 141 percent above the quota.
- In 2009 and 2010, the combined trade and catch was more than double the allowed quota. The weight of this unreported or illegal catch- 35,000 metric tons- is equivalent to 193 jumbo jets or 2,917 African elephants.

- 4. Q: How does the author avoid double-counting bluefin tuna that might, for example, be re-exported in a calendar year?**
- A:** It is true that a bluefin can change hands many times, and travel through multiple countries, before it reaches a diner's plate. To avoid double-counting, the author only used trade data on the final import, export, or re-export of the tuna. Trade of value-added tuna products (such as prepared sushi rolls) was excluded, as those products originated from fish already captured in the import and export documents.
- 5. Q: What about domestic stockpiles of tuna?**
- A:** Because this analysis only looks at international trade, any domestic stockpiles of bluefin tuna (predominantly occurring in Japan and other Asian countries) were accounted for on the date when they first entered their country of final destination. According to the author, domestic stockpiles of bluefin tuna are strictly for domestic consumption; they are not re-exported.
- 6. Q: What about "black market" tuna?**
- A:** This analysis only includes tuna that is reported on official trade documents, or reported to ICCAT by fishing nations. It does not include "black market" tuna or bluefin tuna that may have been mislabeled as another species. The ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) has estimated that the black market trade in bluefin tuna could represent an additional 20 percent of trade figures.
- 7. Q: How does bluefin ranching affect the analysis?**
- A:** Ranching is a widespread practice in the Mediterranean bluefin tuna fishery and involves catching and transferring bluefin to large floating nets where they are held for up to two years as they are fed and fattened. Conversion factors were used to convert weights when the fish are killed to the weight at catch, in order to account for the fattening process – and to therefore get a more accurate picture of the number of fish caught and traded each year.
- 8. Q: How long do bluefin tuna stay in ranches? Would this affect the outcomes of the analysis?**
- A:** In Spain and Malta (which have the largest ranching, or tuna fattening, capacity in the Mediterranean), bluefin tuna are kept in the ranches for a matter of weeks, or months. Fish killed and processed from these ranches are almost always sold within a calendar year, and for this analysis, the author assumed that ranched bluefin tuna reported as traded in the first two quarters of a year were caught the previous year. A notable exception is Croatia, which keeps fish in the ranches for up to two years. For the purposes of this analysis, tuna farmed in Croatia were assumed to have been caught, on average, two years prior to the time it was sold on the international market.
- 9. Q: What about mislabeling bluefin tuna as another species to avoid the legal documentation that must accompany the fish through the supply chain?**
- A:** It is the report author's view that a significant amount of fraud in the tuna supply chain occurs at final sale – for example, bluefin tuna could be imported as yellowfin tuna as it is easier and cheaper to import, given the documentation that is required to legally trade in bluefin tuna. Once it reaches a retailer or market, it may be relabeled as bluefin in order to demand a higher price. According to Mielgo, it is likely that some bluefin tuna have been sold on the market this way, but this would be considered black market tuna as it would not have been counted on an official trade database when it first arrived in its country of origin.

10. Q: What can be done about the gap between the international trade and the quotas set by ICCAT?

A: ICCAT member countries should stand firm on their commitment to implement an electronic catch documentation system for Mediterranean bluefin tuna. This system would increase accountability, reduce fraud, and allow for faster, more effective tracking and counting of bluefin catch each year. The most beneficial aspect of an electronic system would be the verification step – bluefin would not be allowed to proceed through the supply chain until the proper authorities have validated the information that is reported. For example, in the Mediterranean, each purse seine vessel is assigned a quota. If a vessel exceeds its quota in a fishing season, the system could instantly alert authorities. An electronic system could also include a physical barcode, allowing the fish to be tracked through the marketplace. Mandating the use of stereoscopic video systems, which use two cameras to count the number of bluefin that are transferred into ranches, would also provide more accurate information on the number of fish caught each year.

11. Q: Are ICCAT fishing nations aware of the gap? What are they doing to address it?

A: ICCAT countries have taken steps in recent years to reduce total catch in the Mediterranean, by reducing quotas, vessel capacity and adopting improved monitoring and control measures. They have also enforced the ban on spotter planes, used to locate schools of bluefin tuna from the air. Given that the gap exists, and that it is widening, more needs to be done – starting with developing and implementing the electronic catch documentation system.

GENERAL BLUEFIN QUESTIONS

12. Q: What do I need to know about Atlantic bluefin tuna?

A: The bluefin tuna is one of the world’s most remarkable fish. It weighs up to 700kg (1,500 pounds), migrates across the Atlantic – a distance of more than 7,700km (4,800 miles) – in as little as 1 month, and can dive to depths greater than 1,000 metres (3,000 feet). Like mammals, bluefin are warm-blooded. As these tuna traverse the Atlantic, their ability to regulate their body temperature enables them to survive a wide range of conditions and depths. There are three species of bluefin tuna – Atlantic, Pacific and Southern.

13. Q: Why are bluefin tuna important?

A: Atlantic bluefin tuna are what scientists and ecologists call an “apex predator.” It is a species that occupies an important place in the ocean’s food web – the top, which keeps other species in the ecosystem “in check.” In addition to the many other species of fish and marine animals that depend on bluefin tuna to keep the health of the ocean stable, fishermen - both recreational and commercial - depend on bluefin tuna for their livelihoods. Many different culinary traditions in different parts of the world are also dependent, directly and indirectly, on the sustainability of bluefin tuna fisheries.

14. Q: Do we find bluefin tuna in our supermarkets or at restaurants?

A: Bluefin tuna is a delicacy in the sushi trade, but is not regularly sold in supermarkets. You will usually find it as one of the most expensive items on the menu in a high-end sushi restaurant, or as a local delicacy in France, Spain or Italy. Much of the bluefin tuna caught around the world is destined for Japan, which is the world’s largest importer of bluefin tuna, importing around 70-80 percent of the global trade.

15. Q: What are the problems facing bluefin tuna?

A: Relentless fishing pressure on these once plentiful animals has pushed them to the brink of collapse. These marine animals have been overfished for decades, driven by the growing – and global - demand for sushi, coupled with increases in industrial fishing methods. In the western Atlantic, the population crashed 30 years ago, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) listed the fish as “endangered” on its “red list”. Large bluefin tuna that return to reproduce in the Gulf of Mexico, the only known spawning area for the western population, are killed incidentally by longline vessels targeting yellowfin tuna and swordfish. In the Mediterranean bluefin tuna fishery, the large majority of the bluefin are caught by purse seine vessels, which use a large net to encircle whole schools of bluefin and tow them to so-called “ranches,” where the fish are fattened before being killed. Countries in the Mediterranean underreport, misreport, or completely fail to report their catches, as shown in a recent report commissioned by the Pew Environment Group. This analysis of the international trade in Mediterranean bluefin tuna recently found that in 2009 and 2010, what was traded on the international market was more than double the quota agreed to by fishing countries.

16. Q: Who are the major bluefin tuna fishing countries, and who are the major consuming countries?

A: France, Spain, Italy and Malta are the largest Mediterranean bluefin fishing countries. The largest consuming country by far is Japan; approximately 70-80 percent of the bluefin tuna caught in the Mediterranean is sent to for Japan, followed by the United States and European Union.

17. Q: How is Mediterranean bluefin tuna caught?

A: The majority of fishing in the eastern Atlantic is conducted with purse seine fishing vessels. Purse seines are large, vertically floating nets (made of monofilament) which vessels use to surround schools of fish. Each net can be up to one mile long. Once fish are in the net, the base is drawn together, creating a purse. Purse seine catches are used to supply the 60+ tuna ranches in the Mediterranean. A traditional trap fishery also exists in the Mediterranean - called *tonnara* in Italian, *madrague* in French, *almadraba* in Spanish, and *armação* in Portuguese. Fishermen create an elaborate maze of nets that capture and corral bluefin tuna during their spawning season. Traps have been used in the Mediterranean for thousands of years, but since the rise of industrial purse seine fishing, these traditional and artisanal methods have suffered. There is a small longlining fleet in the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic as well. An active illegal driftnet fishery in Italy targets bluefin tuna and swordfish.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ICCAT?

18. Q: What is ICCAT?

A: The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) is a Regional Fishery Management Organization (RFMO) that was established in 1966 to manage tuna and tuna-like species that migrate throughout the Atlantic Ocean. Because bluefin tuna and other highly migratory species cross through many countries’ exclusive economic zones and the high seas, international cooperation through RFMOs is required to effectively manage these species. Every two years, scientists and government officials meet to set catch limits for bluefin tuna (and other species) for the western and eastern Atlantic populations. ICCAT also adopts conservation and management measures for other tuna and tuna-like species, as well as sharks, which are killed in large numbers in ICCAT fisheries. This year ICCAT is reviewing the effectiveness of its compliance system, and next year it will re-assess the status of the eastern and western populations of bluefin tuna and allocate quotas to different fishing countries again.

19. Q: Who is a member of ICCAT?

A: Currently, there are 48 contracting parties to ICCAT (member governments): Albania, Algeria, Angola, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde, China, Croatia, Egypt, the European Union, France (for its territories), Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Iceland, Ivory Coast, Japan, Libya, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Philippines, Russia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Korea, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Syria, Trinidad & Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom (for its territories), United States, Uruguay, Vanuatu, and Venezuela.

20. Q: What does Pew propose to do about the problems facing Mediterranean bluefin tuna?

A: The Pew Environment Group campaign is calling for ICCAT member governments to take meaningful action to ensure compliance—including to stand firm on their commitment to implement an electronic catch documentation system for Mediterranean bluefin tuna and also to finally take action against the illegal driftnets used in the Mediterranean to catch bluefin tuna.

21. Q: What is a catch documentation system?

A: in 2007, ICCAT agreed to implement a paper-based catch documentation system.¹ The bluefin catch document (BCD) tracks fish as they are caught, transported, farmed and traded on the world market. Although the paper BCD was a necessary first step in addressing the impacts of IUU fishing, the system needs to be strengthened in order to better detect and deter fraud and deter illegal fishing and trade.

22. Q: What are the problems with the current BCD system?

A: Unfortunately, the paper-based BCD has failed to fully address the problems of IUU fishing. Printed documents can easily be altered or forged, allowing illegally caught fish to enter the market. A recent trade analysis showed that unreported or fraudulent catch accounted for more than 50 percent of the total amount of bluefin tuna traded in 2010. Paper-based documents also slow data collection and reporting, inhibiting management of the species and effective enforcement of quotas. As of November 2010, crucial information was still missing from ICCAT's BCD database for 75 percent of the purse seine catches from 2008 and 2009.²

23. Q: What does Pew propose to address the difficulty in tracking bluefin tuna?

A: ICCAT countries must replace the current paper-based system with an electronic one. Electronic catch documentation is already being used in the Patagonian toothfish fishery (also known as Chilean sea bass) managed by another regional fisheries management organization, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). An eBCD that covers all bluefin tuna caught, farmed, harvested and traded would reduce fraud by requiring electronic validation from the appropriate authorities at every step of the supply chain. Such a system would also increase compliance, given that a fish could not proceed through the supply chain until information is verified. It will also allow for more accurate and timely reporting of catch data, since information would be quickly transmitted to a central database, instead of being manually entered, as currently required by the paper-based system.

¹ ICCAT. 2009 *Recommendation by ICCAT Amending Recommendation 08-12 on an ICCAT Bluefin Tuna Catch Documentation Program* [Rec. 09-11]. www.iccat.int/Documents/Recs/compendiopdf-e/2009-11-e.pdf.

² International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. 2010. *Looting the Seas: How Overfishing, Fraud, and Negligence Plundered the Majestic Bluefin Tuna*. www.iwatchnews.org/environment/natural-resources/looting-seas.

24. Q: What are some recent quotas for western Atlantic bluefin tuna?

A:

- 2009 quota: 1,900 metric tons
- 2010 quota: 1,800 metric tons
- 2011 quota: 1,750 metric tons

25. Q: What about in the eastern Atlantic?

A:

- In the eastern Atlantic, from 2003-2006, the quotas were set at 32,000 metric tons.
- 2007: 29,500 metric tons (this was actually double the scientific advice, and illegal fishing pushed the estimated total catch to 61,000 metric tons).
- 2008: 28,500 metric tons
- 2009: 22,000 metric tons
- 2010: 13,500 metric tons
- 2011: 12,900 metric tons

Pew's *Mind the Gap* report shows that these quotas have been significantly exceeded, including the years 2009 and 2010, after quotas were decreased and compliance measures tightened.

26. Q: What is tuna 'ranching'?

A: Ranching is a practice whereby whole schools of bluefin are encircled by a purse seine vessel, then transferred to a pen, which is slowly towed back to a fixed location). The fish are then fed and fattened over a period of months before being killed and sold. Bluefin tuna taken to these ranches are often juveniles who have not yet reproduced.

27. Q: What is the scale of illegal or unreported bluefin tuna fishing?

A: Using international trade databases, the estimated catches of Atlantic bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean were seriously under-reported from 1998 to 2010. In 2007, an estimated 61,000 metric tons of Atlantic bluefin were actually caught in the Mediterranean fishery despite the fact that the catch limit was set at 29,500 metric tons (a quota that was already double the scientific advice for a sustainable quota).

- **In 2010, the amount of Mediterranean bluefin tuna traded was more than 141 percent greater than the legal quota set by ICCAT.**

28. Q: Who are the "worst" actors when it comes to Atlantic bluefin tuna?

A: There is no single "worst" actor; unfortunately the entire system is at fault. ICCAT is merely an organization of individual fishing countries that often hide behind the acronym. In recent years, ICCAT has have named individual countries that have not complied with their agreed ICCAT obligations. In 2009, 42 out of 48 ICCAT member countries were identified for being out of compliance with these obligations. A staggering 85% of member countries did not report their catch data properly. Incomplete data on the amount of bluefin killed due to fishing impedes scientists who are tasked with providing scientific advice to managers on appropriate catch levels. Market States and consumers also have a role to play in addressing this.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ITALIAN DRIFTNETS?

29. Q: What are driftnets?

A: Driftnets, by their very name, sound relatively harmless as a fishing method. But as any marine biologist will tell you this gear is surprisingly harmful to life in the ocean. Driftnets are held on the surface of the sea or below it, with floating devices. They can be miles long.

30. Q: Why are they a problem?

A: Depending on the size of the mesh, they entangle, and often kill, anything that happens to swim past—including sea turtles, dolphins, whales, sharks, swordfish and tuna. Most countries long ago recognized that driftnets were harming far too many marine species to continue as an accepted form of fishing. They were banned on the high seas by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993; the European Union followed suit in 2002. In 2003, ICCAT prohibited the use of driftnets to catch tuna and swordfish. Yet an active –and illegal – driftnet fishery still exists in the Mediterranean, mainly in Italy. Turkey and Morocco also use this indiscriminate fishing method.

31. Q: What does ICCAT need to do address the driftnets issue?

A: The loopholes in the Italian law must be closed and the *ferrettara* (a type of coastal driftnet permitted by Italy to target small coastal species but illegally used to target bluefin tuna and swordfish) must be prohibited immediately. The *spadara*, the high seas driftnet, is already banned). Pew is urging ICCAT to list Italian vessels known to have engaged in illegal driftnet activities on its IUU vessel list to help put a stop to the wasteful driftnet use in the Mediterranean. In addition to ICCAT action, the European Union must crack down on this non-compliance by Italy, an EU Member State.

32. Q: What difference would such a listing achieve?

A: By placing these vessels on ICCAT's blacklist, ICCAT member countries would be required to refuse them entry to ports, making it more difficult for these illegal operators to offload their contraband tuna and swordfish. These vessels would also be more easily recognizable to enforcement officials as they would be on a recognized black list shared by all Mediterranean countries.

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