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Press release | 17.06.2010

Bluefin Tuna

Greens welcome new traceability of bluefin tuna but still call for a halt to fishing

Today the European Parliament will vote on the Romeva report, and adopt a critical new control measure for the bluefin tuna fishery. If it is fully complied with, the Bluefin Catch Document (BCD) will allow full traceability of all bluefin tuna from the moment that they are caught to the point of final sale, including any international trade. It was adopted by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) in 2009 and is now being incorporated into EU law. Commenting on his report, Green MEP Raül Romeva said:

"The new Bluefin Catch Document is a welcome and valuable addition to the system slowly being put in place to regulate the bluefin tuna fishery, but by itself, it is not going to save the species from collapse. After many years of over-exploitation, including large catches taken illegally by EU and other fleets, bluefin tuna is severely depleted. Commissioner Damanaki recognized this by supporting a ban on international trade in bluefin earlier this year at CITES, which would have had the effect of significantly reducing catches, bringing them more in line with scientific advice.

If the European Union is to be consistent in its policy on bluefin tuna, then it must behave more responsibly at the next meeting of ICCAT, to take place in Paris from 17-27 November. For many years, the EU used its very considerable influence in ICCAT to push for quotas that were far higher than scientific advice, while at the same time not putting in place strict monitoring of the fishery. As a result, quotas were sometimes exceeded.

In the past two years, coordination efforts by the European Fisheries Control Agency in Vigo, Spain, has considerably strengthened the surveillance of the fishery. This has been another necessary improvement to the management of the bluefin fishery.

Unfortunately, improvements in traceability and surveillance are too little, too late. The option with the best chance of ensuring the survival of bluefin tuna is to close the fishery for long enough to allow the stock to recover."

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