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Report Summary

WWF UNCOVERS MASSIVE UNREPORTED TRADE OF ATLANTIC BLUEFIN TUNA THROUGH PANAMA

A new study commissioned by WWF uncovers that between the years 2000 and 2010 as much as 14,327 tonnes of processed Atlantic bluefin were traded via Panama without being reported to the international organization managing the fishery, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). This volume of trade corresponds to an estimated weight of 18,704 tonnes of live fish.

Based on official trade and customs databases, the study documents how bluefin tuna has been exported to Panama from Mediterranean countries including Spain, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey.

It also shows how Panama, in turn, has re-exported to Japan as much as 13,730 tonnes of processed bluefin. Not a single shipment was ever reported to ICCAT according to available records.

The detailed examination of the national customs trade database of Panama didn't reveal any trace of this trade. Based on the analysed databases, the primary commercial origin of 11,691 tonnes of processed bluefin exported by Panama to Japan remains unknown.

The detected trade peaked in 2003 and 2004, with 3,000-4,000 tonnes per year, but was still on-going to a lesser extent as late as 2010.

According to ICCAT rules in force during the entire study period, any international trade of Atlantic bluefin tuna had to be duly reported by ICCAT Contracting Parties, to enable cross-checking with catch quotas. All involved countries mentioned in the study were ICCAT Contracting Parties at the time the unreported trade operations were detected.

The unreported trade of bluefin tuna through Panama could be explained without the fish having been physically shipped to Panama. Simply, Panamanian-flagged reefer vessels and the involvement of intermediary Panama-based companies could have mediated between producer countries and the final market in Japan, which would have yielded the trade data records observed.

If confirmed, the situation reported would fully qualify as IUU (Illegal, unreported and unregulated) fishing according to the United Nations' FAO standards and would equal environmental crime.

WWF calls on ICCAT and the countries identified in the study, including the EU, to urgently launch a serious investigation to either rule out or endorse the suspicions of IUU activities pinpointed by our study.

The Atlantic bluefin tuna fishery in the Mediterranean has been plagued with overfishing in recent years, fuelled by Japanese demand and the massive development of tuna fattening farms in the region. According to ICCAT, IUU activities in the bluefin tuna fishery peaked in 2007 with an estimated catch of 61,000 tonnes, worth more than twice the legal quotas. There is consensus that recent catches have significantly reduced, but strong doubts still exist as to the real amount of catches. A recent WWF study showed that current fishing capacity in this fishery would still allow for catches doubling the total annual quotas.

The 2012 Annual Meeting of ICCAT will take place in Agadir, Morocco, from 12-19 November.

WWF calls on ICCAT Contracting Parties to stick to the clear advice of scientists to not increase the current total allowable catch (TAC) for the next 3 years (set at 12,900 t per year) in order to ensure the recovery of bluefin tuna stock.



Supplementary information: Tables

	Reported exporting country	Recorded traded weight by exporting country (Kgs)	Total recorded traded weight by year (Kgs)
1999		0,00	0,00
2000		0,00	0,00
2001		0,00	0,00
2002		0,00	0,00
2003	MOROCCO	178.192,00	178.192,00
2004	ITALY	211.000,00	1.187.687,00
	MOROCCO	196.750,00	
	SPAIN	227.330,00	
	TUNISIA	223.277,00	
	TURKEY	329.330,00	
2005	MOROCCO	82.800,00	473.167,00
	TURKEY	390.367,00	
2006	MOROCCO	263.540,00	263.540,00
2007	MOROCCO	116.520,00	116.520,00
2008	MOROCCO	201.637,00	201.637,00
2009	MOROCCO	161.499,00	161.499,00
2010	MOROCCO	53.058,00	53.958,00
	NETHERLANDS	900,00	
2011		0,00	0,00

Recorded exports of E-BFT to Panama by Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. Source: EuroStat, Institut National de la Statistique, Tunisia, Office des Changes - Ministère des Finances, Morocco and TurkStat Foreign Trade Database.

	Exports to Panama recorded traded weight (Kgs)	Panama re-exports to Japan recorded traded weight (Kgs)	Import-re-export inconsistencies (Kgs)
1999	0,00	0,00	0,00
2000	0,00	855.104,00	855.104,00
2001	0,00	1.615.834,00	1.615.834,00
2002	0,00	2.405.240,00	2.405.240,00
2003	178.192,00	3.323.130,00	3.144.938,00
2004	1.187.687,00	4.017.667,00	2.829.980,00
2005	473.167,00	1.144.675,00	671.508,00
2006	263.540,00	146.200,00	-117.340,00
2007	116.520,00	0,00	-116.520,00
2008	201.637,00	0,00	-201.637,00
2009	161.499,00	0,00	-161.499,00
2010	53.958,00	223.124,00	169.166,00
2011	0,00	0,00	0,00
Total	14.327.970,00		

Export and re-export trade-flux data crosscheck Total traded processed BFT is highlighted in blue. Data on Panama re-exports to Japan are from Japanese Customs.

Unreported trade of Atlantic bluefin tuna

14,327 TONNES

Of Atlantic bluefin tuna traded between 2000 and 2010 via Panama

18,704 TONNES

This volume of trade corresponds to an estimated weight of 18,704 tonnes of live fish



61,000 TONNES

IUU activities in the bluefin tuna fishery peaked in 2007

3000-4000

TONNES

Trade peaked in 2003 and 2004, with 3000-4000 tonnes per year

For more information

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To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.
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