EU fishing opportunities for 2024–2026

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European Commission amends fishing opportunities outside EU waters in consultation with RFMOs

Council Regulation (EU) 2024/1856 of 28 June 2024 amending Regulation (EU) 2024/257 fixing for 2024, 2025 and 2026 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters, and Regulation (EU) 2023/194 fixing for 2023 such fishing opportunities

Council Regulation (EU) 2024/257 of 10 January 2024 fixing for 2024, 2025 and 2026 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters, and amending Regulation (EU) 2023/194

Update

The European Commission has amended some fishing opportunities for stocks outside EU waters based on outcomes of consultations with non-EU countries and regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), and new scientific advice.

Impacted products

fish

What is changing?

The following decisions, agreed within the relevant RMFOs, will be implemented in EU law.

The **International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas** (ICCAT):

- has set total allowable catches (TACs) for 2024 for North Atlantic albacore (Thunnus alalunga) at 47,251 tonnes, and for blue shark (Prionace glauca) at 30,000 and 27,711 tonnes for the North and South Atlantic, respectively
- in 2024 maintains the TACs set for 2023 for Eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna (Thunnus thynnus), Mediterranean albacore and South Atlantic albacore (Thunnus alalunga), Mediterranean, and North and South Atlantic swordfish (Xiphias gladius), blue marlin (Makaira nigricans), white marlin (Tetrapturus albidus), yellowfin tuna (Thunnus albacares), bigeye tuna (Thunnus

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obesus); and maintains the retention allowance for South Atlantic shortfin mako (Isurus oxyrinchus)

- maintains a maximum limit of 300 fish aggregating devices (FADs) per fishing vessel in 2024, and a 72-day closure period for the use of FADs in order to reduce the fishing mortality of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna
- recommends that the EU carry over a percentage of its unused quota of fishing opportunities from 2 years ago or 1 year ago, on request, to 2024.

Decision (EU) 2023/2807 establishes the EU position to be taken in the ICCAT for the period 2024–2028.

Regulation (EU) 2024/897 implements into EU law legally binding measures for the conservation of certain fishery resources in the ICCAT Convention area. A new provision prohibits EU vessels from harming shortfin mako sharks caught in the Atlantic Ocean north of 5°N, and requires prompt release of such shortfin mako sharks unharmed into the sea. To avoid overlap, Art. 27(6) of Regulation (EU) 2024/257 is deleted.

EU vessels are already prohibited from retaining on board, transhipping, or landing any carcass, whole or in parts, of bigeye thresher sharks (*Alopias superciliosus*), oceanic whitetip sharks (*Carcharhinus longimanus*), hammerhead sharks (*Sphyrnidae* family), and silky sharks (*Carcharhinus falciformis*), caught in association with fisheries in the ICCAT Convention area, and requiring prompt release of unharmed specimens back into the sea (Regulation 2017/2107). To avoid overlap, similar provisions are deleted from Art. 27 of Regulation (EU) 2024/257.

The **Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources** (CCAMLR) has adopted catch limits for target and by-catch species for the period from 1 December 2023 to 30 November 2024. Decision (EU) 2023/2812 establishes the EU position to be taken in the CCAMLR for the period 2024–2028.

The **Indian Ocean Tuna Commission** (IOTC) has adopted a Resolution establishing a catch limit for bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) for 2024 and 2025, for the first time in the IOTC Area of Competence. The IOTC maintains the limits on fishing capacity, on FADs, and on supply vessels; and maintains the catch limit for yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) in that area. Decision (EU) 2023/2901 establishes the EU position to be taken in the IOTC for the period 2024–2028.

At its annual meeting, the **South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation** (SPRFMO) adopted catch limits for jack mackerel (*Trachurus murphyi*) and maintained exploratory fisheries for toothfishes (*Dissostichus* spp.). Those measures are implemented in Regulation 2024/1015. Decision (EU) 2023/2826 establishes the EU position to be taken in the SPRFMO Commission for the period 2024–2028.

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At its 2023 annual meeting, the **Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission** (IATTC) decided to maintain the current measures applicable in its Convention area.

At its 2023 annual meeting, the **Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna** (CCSBT) adopted the TAC for Southern bluefin tuna (*Thunnus maccoyii*) for a 3-year period from 2024 to 2026.

At its 2023 annual meeting, the **South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation** (SEAFO) decided to maintain the 2023 TACs in the SEAFO Convention area in 2024. Decision (EU) 2023/2823 establishes the EU position to be taken in the SEAFO Commission for the period 2024–2028.

The 2023 annual meeting of the **Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission** (WCPFC) was held on 4–8 December 2023. At this meeting, WCPFC decided to maintain the purse seine effort limits and maximum numbers of these vessels fishing for tropical tunas. Provisions related to the management of FADs in the tropical tunas fishery, and in particular to the FAD closure, were amended. At any time, purse seine vessels should deploy no more than 350 FADs at sea, with activated instrumented buoys. Those measures should be implemented in Union law. Decision (EU) 2023/2810 establishes the EU position to be taken in the WCPFC Commission for the period 2024–2028.

At its annual meeting in 2023, the **Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement** (SIOFA) adopted a by-catch limit for Portuguese dogfish (*Centroscymnus coelolepis*) and amended the boundaries of the Del Cano and Williams Ridge toothfishes (*Dissostichus* spp.) management areas. It extended observer and tagging requirements for toothfishes in the rest of the Agreement Area. The previously adopted fishing opportunities for the stocks covered by that Agreement are maintained.

Why?

Where RFMOs adopt fishing opportunities, set TACs, or take other measures regarding stocks in their Convention areas that affect fishing opportunities for EU Member States, those measures must be implemented in EU law.

Timeline

Regulation 2024/1856 applies from 1 December 2023 (Art. 2 applies from 1 January 2024).

Regulation 2024/257 applies from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024.

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Background

Regulations on fishing opportunities aim to limit fish harvests to levels that are consistent with the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy. Fishing opportunities are set for most stocks every year, and for certain stocks every 2–3 years. The European Commission has published an overview based on scientific advice: Sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2024.

EU Regulation 2024/257 has fixed the fishing opportunities for 2024, 2025, and 2026 for certain stocks in EU waters. As a member of RFMOs and fisheries bodies worldwide, the EU participates in, and votes on, their decisions. The European Commission proposes, and the European Council adopts, positions expressed on behalf of the EU. The latest Council Decisions set out the guiding principles of the EU's position in RFMOs for the period 2024–2028. This position is then adjusted and specified year-to-year before each annual meeting of a given RFMO or fisheries body. Catch limits and other measures agreed in RFMOs of which the EU is a member are implemented in EU law.

Resources

Council Decisions:

2024/395 on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the Extended Commission of the Convention for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna

2024/366 on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission and the meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Programme

2023/2901 on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

2023/2888 on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement

2023/2826 on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation

2023/2823 on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the South-East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation

2023/2812 on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources

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2023/2810 on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)

2023/2807 on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas

2012/19/EU on the approval of fishing opportunities in EU waters off the coast of French Guiana to fishing vessels of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Council Regulations:

2024/1015 fixing for 2024, 2025 and 2026 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters

2024/897 laying down management, conservation and control measures applicable in the Convention area of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and establishing a multiannual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean

2023/194 fixing for 2023 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters, as well as fixing for 2023 and 2024 such fishing opportunities for certain deep-sea fish stocks

2017/2403 on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets

2017/2107 laying down management, conservation and control measures applicable in the Convention area of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)

European Commission (2023) Sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2024. Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

Sources

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