



Expression of Interest

Opportunity to take part in the electronic tagging of Atlantic bluefin tuna as part of the Thunnus UK project

To: Fishing vessel skippers and owners

Date of issue: 7th June 2019

Response Deadline: 21st June 2019 at 11am

Late submissions will not be accepted unless postmarked prior to deadline date

Responses to be posted, emailed or uploaded to <https://www.delta-esourcing.com/respond/EFVQZ32VNG>

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An opportunity to aid in gathering data on Atlantic bluefin tuna:

Cefas and the University of Exeter are collaborating on a research project to provide a baseline understanding of the ecology of Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*; ABFT) in waters of the British Isles. The project is supported by the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

We will be continuing the ABFT tagging programme in the SW of the UK, which began in 2018, into 2019 to increase knowledge on seasonal migrations and behaviour. We would like to widen the participation in the tagging programme to interested recreational fishers as we seek to deploy up to 30 state of the art electronic tags on ABFT. We are now seeking expressions of interest from willing skippers/ vessel owners to work closely with the scientific tagging team during fishing operations in 2019.

We are seeking volunteer fishing teams (a vessel with a minimum of a skipper, one crew and a fisher) to collaborate with the University of Exeter and Cefas. Their role in the programme will be to catch and supply live Atlantic bluefin tuna for scientific tagging purposes. Volunteer vessels will receive authorisation to target Atlantic bluefin tuna from the MMO and will work closely with a tagging coordinator and a central tagging vessel to plan and carry out daily fishing activities. ABFT will need to be caught using towed lures to ensure consistency with fishing conducted in 2018.

The default area of operation will be the Falmouth Bay area, although other locations may be considered depending on the spatial distribution of Atlantic bluefin tuna and the port of departure/general fishing area of the tagging central vessel.

FAQs

1. Can I take paying anglers?

As the dispensation is for scientific purposes only, the Marine Management Organisation mandate that paying anglers are not permitted aboard vessels involved in the programme. A per-fish bonus of £150+VAT for each Atlantic bluefin tuna caught and supplied to the tagging team will be paid.

2. Can anyone take part?

To ensure high welfare standards, skipper(s) and crew(s) should have demonstrable experience of capturing and releasing Atlantic bluefin tuna. Selected skipper(s) and crew(s) will need to attend a project meeting prior to participating, where fishing practices will be discussed, and competencies approved. In order to assess at-sea competence participation in fishing aboard a tagging vessel may be offered. Skipper(s) may take additional fishers aboard their vessels. These fishers will require competency checks prior to participation.

3. Are all vessels eligible to take part?

To maintain the highest levels of safety at sea for all volunteer crews and staff the vessel must have, and supply, a copy of a valid Marine & Coastguard Agency Certificate or Small Commercial Vessel Certificate with an area coding of 5 or below. The skipper should be able to supply on request a copy of the insurance cover for the vessel and personnel on board including an observer, when present. All crew-members and skippers will be expected to wear visible lifejackets for their health and safety whilst undertaking deck-based operations.

Vessel Safety Information Card (VSIC)

As part of Cefas safety procedures, Cefas personnel will assist the skipper of participating vessels to complete a Cefas Vessel Safety Information Card (VSIC). If the vessel complies with the minimum MCA requirements for coding 5 or below then the VSIC should be completed satisfactorily.

4. Do I need specific gear?

Atlantic bluefin tuna are powerful fish that require specialist tackle to catch and release in a safe and responsible manner. Skipper(s) should supply requisite gear for the safe and responsible live capture and release of Atlantic bluefin tuna, which should be listed in the EOI.

5. What happens when I catch an Atlantic bluefin tuna?

Communication to the tagging vessel when a fish is hooked is essential to enable the tagging vessel to come alongside. The fish will then need to be transferred to the tagging vessel using methods used successfully in 2018. Methods regarding the transfer of fish, along with other aspects of the project, will be discussed and finalised at the pre-fieldwork project meeting that all invited skippers and crew will be asked to attend.

6. Should I expect to have an observer onboard?

Project observers will move among participating vessels to ensure high-operating standards. Skippers of participating vessels will be notified in advance when observers are to accompany them during fishing activity.

7. Should I expect to have an observer onboard?

We anticipate that no more than three vessels will be involved on any particular day (one tagging vessel, plus two participating fishing vessels). Participation will be offered to fishing vessels on the basis of their stated availability and the number of vessels available. Days will be offered on a fair and transparent basis