



ISSF POSITION STATEMENT

Presented during the 89th Meeting of the
Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission
in Guayaquil, Ecuador

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The **International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF)** is a global partnership among the tuna industry, scientists and WWF, the global conservation organization. Our mission is to work toward the science-based conservation and management of tuna stocks and the protection of ocean health by supporting regional fisheries management organizations and advocating for the recommendations of each organization's scientific advisory body.

The first part of our statement addresses three of the most important issues facing global tuna sustainability: (1) reference points and harvest control rules, (2) fleet capacity, and (3) the management of FADs. The second part addresses challenges specific to the IATTC.

1. Harvest Control Rules (HCRs) and Reference Points. In 2014, the Commission adopted interim target and limit reference points and an interim HCR for tropical tunas. In 2015, the Staff is recommending the adoption of a more complete HCR that takes the limit reference points into account. **At this year's meeting, ISSF:**

- *Endorses the adoption of the Staff's recommended harvest control rules with specific timelines for reductions to target F_{MSY} and rebuilding timeframes should they become necessary.*
- *Urges the Commission to direct that the HCRs and reference points be tested for robustness to the main uncertainties in the assessment, such as the stock-recruitment relationship.*

2. Closed Vessel Registries and Management of Fleet Capacity. Though the IATTC is the only tuna RFMO with a closed vessel registry, its current capacity is well in excess of resource productivity. **In order to further progressing the management of fishing capacity, ISSF:**

- *Urges the IATTC to implement the recommendations from the 2014 Technical Experts Workshop on the Capacity of the Tuna-fishing Fleet in the EPO in order to strengthen the 2005 Plan for the Regional Management of Fishing Capacity and reduce the current capacity that is well in excess of resource productivity.*
- *Encourages the IATTC to consider the outcomes of the 2014 ISSF workshop on the transfer of fishing capacity from developed to developing countries in any regional capacity management scheme. The workshop report can be accessed here. <http://iss-foundation.org/resources/downloads/?did=522>*

3. Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) Management. Setting on FADs accounts for nearly 40% of global tuna catches and 50% of global skipjack catches. The time is ripe for a concerted global effort to gather and report FAD data to RFMOs (e.g. via logbooks) in order to better monitor FAD usage and to establish a sound basis for their management in every ocean region. ISSF recognizes the substantial progress made by IATTC's adoption in 2013 of Resolution C-13-04 regarding FAD management and reporting, starting 1 January 2015. ISSF also applauds those IATTC fleets that have begun providing FAD data consistent with the Resolution C-13-04 regarding FAD management

and reporting. To progress the collection of FAD data and adoption of science-based FAD management measures, ISSF:

- *Urges CPCs to provide FAD data as called for in the Resolution, and also detailed analysis of FAD usage patterns and catch per effort analysis by their fleets operating in the eastern Pacific Ocean, thus enabling a determination of changes in fishing capacity and likely impacts on stocks managed through the IATTC.*
- *Encourages all CPCs to implement as soon as possible the provisions in Resolution C-13-04 regarding the use of non-entangling FAD designs to reduce the incidence of entanglement of bycatch species, using biodegradable material as much as possible, based on the principles outlined in the Resolution. This is a critical step in the reduction of shark mortality and reduction of other ecosystem impacts in the eastern Pacific Ocean.*
- *Encourages industry to authorize companies that operate the satellite buoy systems used to track the FADs to provide to the IATTC Secretariat buoy position data as stipulated in IATTC SAC-06-11 for scientific analyses, with a time lag of four months to protect the owner's proprietary information.*
- *Supports the 2015 SAC recommendation that the IATTC convene a meeting on FADs and FAD impacts with scientists and stakeholders.*

4. Tuna Stocks

Bigeye and yellowfin tunas. IATTC scientific staff presented results of updated assessments for bigeye and yellowfin tunas to the 2015 SAC meeting. According to the “base-case” runs, the spawning biomass for the yellowfin and bigeye stocks is close to the MSY level but neither stock is being overfished. Based on these analyses, the staff recommended continuation of Resolution C-13-01 without extending the length of the fishery closure. However, there is considerable uncertainty around the base case results as these are highly sensitive to assumptions, such as the use of a stock-recruitment relationship. An additional concern that was noted during the SAC meeting was that the catch rate of bigeye in floating object sets has shown a decreasing trend in recent years. Furthermore, ISSF is concerned about recent increases in activation of latent capacity in the EPO purse seine fishery.

- *Considering uncertainties in the assessments and likely increases in fishing capacity and floating object-directed effort, ISSF urges the IATTC to monitor the situation closely and be prepared to implement stronger measures in the future, should they become necessary.*

Pacific bluefin. The 2014 assessment and projections from the ISC reiterate that the stock is highly depleted and that fishing mortality exceeds all reasonable proxies for F_{MSY} . The recovery of the stock may be further delayed if the current scenario of low recruitment continues which is heavily reliant on a major adult cohort in the population. Complementary conservation measures adopted by WCPFC calling for reductions in catch for Pacific bluefin tuna of <30 kg in size are noted but conservation of spawning stocks should also be implemented.

- *ISSF supports the staff's recommended catch limits for Pacific bluefin in the EPO as outlined in C-14-06 but encourages close monitoring of fisheries and catch and completion of a revised stock assessment for Pacific bluefin in early 2016.*
- *ISSF further supports the IATTC SAC recommendation for IATTC and WCPFC collaboration in the management of Pacific Bluefin tuna through the conservation of both juvenile and adult stocks.*

5. IATTC Compliance, VMS and IUU Vessel Lists. The IATTC must improve its transparency regarding the levels of compliance by members with their obligations to the Commission. In addition, improvements are needed to strengthen IATTC's monitoring, control and surveillance tools, such as its VMS and IUU Vessel List measures. **ISSF urges the IATTC to:**

- *Set clear milestones for improving compliance by requiring CPCs to submit a compliance action plan for identified infractions, and begin discussing how the Commission will respond to repeated and significant instances of non-compliance.*
- *Continue to reform its satellite-based VMS by amending C-14-02 to ensure that VMS data can be available to the Secretariat and be used for scientific or compliance purposes.*
- *Reform C-05-07 so the IUU Vessel listing process is in line with best practices, such as including provisions for intersessional decision-making, making clearer delisting procedures, expanding the type of admissible information and harmonizing the criteria constituting IUU fishing across tuna RFMOs.*
- *Adopt amendment to C-11-07 to increase the transparency of the IATTC compliance process by making public the responses from members to areas of identified non-compliance, increasing the level of detail in the Review Committee report regarding the specific areas where members and CNMs are non-compliant and its recommendations to address such non-compliance.*

6. Sharks and Rays. Fishery indicators for silky sharks in the EPO suggest significant declines in abundance since the 1990s. However, the EPO purse seine fishery accounts for a small fraction (~5%) of catch highlighting the importance for management measures to include all sources of mortality, especially longline and shark-targeted longline fisheries. Smaller size class purse seine vessels operating in coastal regions may have relatively high interaction rates, so improved monitoring is required.

- *ISSF urges the Commission to adopt the 2015 scientific staff's precautionary recommendations to conserve silky sharks as outlined in IATTC SAC 06-11.*
- *ISSF urges the Commission to take immediate steps to enforce the existing resolution on shark finning, and strengthen that resolution by requiring that all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached.*
- *ISSF supports the 2015 IATTC SAC recommendation for Member submission of data to allow ecological risk analysis for the main species of pelagic elasmobranchs impacted by EPO fisheries.*

Regarding mobulid rays, the staff recommendations suggest that simple handling practices such as those recommended in document WCPFC-SC8-2012/ EB-IP-12 and ISSF's Guidebook to Sustainable Purse Seine Fishing Practices (Poison *et al.* 2012, [Good practices to reduce the mortality of sharks and rays caught incidentally by the tropical tuna purse seiners](http://www.issfguidebooks.org/purseseine-cover/); <http://www.issfguidebooks.org/purseseine-cover/>) can enhance their condition and live release in purse seine fisheries.

- *ISSF urges the Commission to adopt the best handling practices for mobulid rays in purse seine fisheries outlined in IATTC SAC 06-11 as mandatory measures.*