



## ISSF POSITION STATEMENT

Presented to the 20th Special Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas in Vilamoura, Portugal 14-21 November 2016

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### ***Tropical Tunas***

The SCRS reassessed the status of Atlantic yellowfin in 2016. The results of the new assessment indicate that stock status has improved since the last (2011) assessment: Overfishing is not occurring and stock abundance has been increasing, although the stock is slightly overfished. ***ISSF supports the recommendation of the SCRS that the Commission maintain the current TAC level of 110,000 t so as to allow the stock to continue to rebuild.***

### ***Temperate Tunas***

The SCRS reassessed the status of North Atlantic and South Atlantic albacore stocks and found that they are no longer being overfished or overfished. ISSF congratulates ICCAT for demonstrating once again that overfished tuna stocks can be recovered with sound management. ***ISSF supports the recommendation of the SCRS that the Commission maintain the current TAC levels for these two stocks in order to maintain them at a healthy level.***

Serious data deficiencies for the Mediterranean albacore stock have been highlighted by the SCRS for several years, but have not been addressed by CPCs. ***ISSF welcomes the SCRS decision to update the stock assessment in 2017 and urges the CPCs identified by SCRS to review their historical data for Mediterranean albacore and submit revisions to SCRS.***

***Harvest Control Rules (HCRs) and Reference Points.*** HCRs are a set of well-defined management actions to be taken in response to changes in stock status with respect to target and limit reference points. ISSF endorses the application of the Precautionary Approach using clear target and limit reference points and HCRs, as called for by the UN Fish Stocks Agreement and by some RFMO Conventions. ISSF applauds the successful meetings of the Standing Working Group for Enhancing the Dialogue Between Fisheries Scientists and Managers (SWGSM) in 2014 and 2015. ISSF also applauds the adoption in 2015 of Recommendation 15-04 to establish HCRs for the North Atlantic Albacore Stock and Recommendation 15-07 on the Development of HCRs and of Management Strategy Evaluation.

- ***ISSF urges the Commission to continue to advance the essential processes outlined in these Recommendations, and in accordance with the agreed timelines.***

***Full Retention of Tuna Catch.*** While other RFMOs have adopted tuna catch retention measures, to date ICCAT has not taken steps to do the same. The dumping of less valuable tuna in favor of higher value catch distorts our understanding of the actual impact on the tuna stocks by fishing operations.

- ***ISSF urges ICCAT to follow the recommendation of the FAD Working Group to develop a total retention policy for tropical tunas to better manage by-catch and reduce discards in tropical tuna fisheries.***

***MCS: Observers, VMS, IUU Vessel Lists and Port State Measures.*** Effective monitoring, control and surveillance measures that meet global standards are essential to data collection, promoting

compliance with conservation measures, and combatting IUU fishing activities on the water and in port. In particular, comprehensive observer coverage on vessels is a critical component of sustainable fisheries management for tropical tunas. ICCAT has 100% observer coverage on tropical tuna purse seiners, but only during the FAD moratorium. Since 2013 ISSF has required that processors, traders, importers, transporters, marketers and others involved in the seafood industry conduct transactions only with those large-scale purse seine vessels that have 100% observer coverage (human or electronic if proven to be effective) on every fishing trip and observing every fishing operation. And, as a result, now most large-scale purse seine vessels operating in the Atlantic have such observer coverage.

#### **ISSF urges ICCAT:**

- *To implement the FAD Working Group recommendation to extend the 100% observer coverage on large-scale purse seine vessels to cover the entire year as the IATTC and WCPFC have done. This would be facilitated if it included a regional mechanism that provides that an observer from a coastal State national program (registered with the Secretariat) will be valid in other countries' EEZs.*
- *To adopt further amendments to modernize its VMS measure and bring it in line with global best practices, such as providing for the availability and use of VMS data to the Secretariat, SCRS scientists and the Compliance Committee.*
- *ISSF urges ICCAT to strengthen its IUU Vessel List process in line with best practices, such as clarifying the listing and delisting processes, harmonizing listing criteria and expanding the scope of admissible information.*
- *ISSF also urges all CPCs that have not yet done so to ratify the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing.*

***Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) Management.*** Setting on FADs accounts for nearly 40% of global tuna catches and 50% of global skipjack catches. *ISSF notes the creation in 2014 of a Working Group on FADs that involves all stakeholders. ISSF commends ICCAT for holding the second meeting of the Working Group this year. ISSF endorses the recommendations in the 2016 Report of the FAD Working Group and encourages the Commission and SCRS to implement them.*

***Supply Vessels.*** Supply vessel activities related to drifting FADs increases the efficiency of the purse seiner by reducing the time needed by the purse seiner to search for or maintain FADs. Greater data collection is needed regarding supply vessels, as well as regulation and monitoring.

#### **ISSF urges ICCAT to:**

- *Collect data on the number and use of supply vessels, including identifying which particular purse seine vessels each support, and the number of FADs being deployed and serviced by such vessels.*
- *Identify on the Record of Vessel what activities supply vessels are engaged in, whether they are working as bait boats, servicing FADs, or engaging in fishing.*
- *Ensure observer coverage and VMS requirements apply to supply vessels so data from these fishing activities are collected and reported.*

***Longline Fisheries, Observer Coverage and Transshipment.*** ISSF is concerned that the SCRS has highlighted that the current 5% observer coverage requirement is inappropriate to provide reasonable estimates of total bycatch. ISSF also notes that often the paucity of data on catches and interactions with non-target species prevents assessments and adoption of conservation measures. ISSF is equally

concerned with the failure of some CPCs to provide the required transshipment reports or advance notifications. ISSF also recognizes that electronic monitoring systems and e-reporting are being tested and developed which could potentially be used to address some of these problems. **ISSF urges the Commission to:**

- ***Implement the SCRS recommendation to increase the minimum level of observer coverage to 20% and at the same time strengthen CPC compliance by identifying and sanctioning non-compliance through the Compliance Committee.***
- ***To progress the development of standards for E-monitoring and E-reporting standards, as soon as possible.***
- ***Amend the ICCAT Transshipment Recommendation so that it covers longline vessels of 20m or greater LOA.***

***Closed Vessel Registries and Management of Fleet Capacity.*** Experts agree that there is overcapacity in the global tuna fleets. Fishing fleet overcapacity increases pressure to weaken management measures and eventually leads to stock overexploitation. ISSF continues to be concerned with the global growth of fishing capacity in ICCAT. **ICCAT urges ICCAT:**

- ***To establish limited entry through closed vessel registries and to develop a common currency to measure fishing capacity, such as cubic meters of well volume.***
- ***Supports the Kobe III call for creating mechanisms to transfer capacity to developing countries.***

***Compliance.*** ICCAT has one of the best designed and most transparent compliance assessment process of the five tuna RFMOs. The one area where it can improve, however, is regarding its scheme of responses to non-compliance. The Compliance Committee is currently using such a scheme only on a pilot basis. ***ISSF urges the Commission to finalize the development of a scheme of responses to non-compliance and codify it in a permanent Recommendation, as soon as possible.***

***More Information and Technical Resources:*** For more information on RFMO best practices, ISSF has produced and published technical papers and workshop reports in the following areas: RFMO compliance processes, purse seine observer programs, IUU Vessel Lists, transshipment, supply vessels, VMS, bycatch, stock status and stock assessment methods, and tuna management and vessel capacity. These resources are all available at: <http://iss-foundation.org/knowledge-tools/technical-and-meeting-reports/>