

INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION (IOTC)

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Tuna Conservation

Yellowfin Tuna

What are the issues?

Overfishing of the Indian Ocean (IO) Yellowfin (YFT) tuna stocks needs to end, and effective management measures — consistent with advice from the IOTC Science Committee — are needed.

Why are we concerned?

The 2016 assessment of IO–YFT was more optimistic than the 2015 assessment. However, this assessment confirmed that the stock is overfished and subject to overfishing. The IOTC Scientific Committee has advised there is an 88% risk of continuing to exceed the MSY-based biomass reference point if catches increase or remain at current levels (defined as 2015 catch levels) until 2018.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

- 1) Retain the overall catch reductions contained in Resolution 16/01 despite the 2016 assessment results, and rigorously evaluate its effectiveness when the results of the next stock assessment are available.
- (2) Ensure Contracting Party and Cooperating Non-Contracting Party (CPC) compliance with Resolution 16/01 through the IOTC Compliance Committee.
- (3) Urgently develop a harvest strategy for IO-YFT, including harvest control rules.

Gillnet Fisheries

What is the issue?

Gillnet fisheries account for a substantial amount of tuna catches in the IO. Data on these fisheries must be collected and reported for all gillnet fleets and incorporated into stock assessments.

Our Top Asks for IOTC in 2017:

- 1** Develop harvest strategies for all key tuna species, especially yellowfin tuna
- 2** Strengthen monitoring, control and surveillance measures to support data collection and the implementation of harvest strategies
- 3** Strengthen FAD management through science-based measures
- 4** Require 100% observer coverage on large-scale purse seine vessels and increase compliance with the longline coverage requirement
- 5** Strengthen the compliance assessment process

Why are we concerned?

The IOTC Science Committee (SC) has noted that gillnet fisheries are inadequately monitored yet have a substantial impact on marine ecosystems. The SC has also recommended that the Commission consider if the prohibition in Resolution 12/12 should be extended to apply within CPC exclusive economic zones (EEZs).

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

- (1) Increase CPCs' compliance with the minimum data collection and reporting requirements in IOTC Resolutions [15/02](#) and [15/01](#) for all gillnet fleets.
- (2) Consider freezing gillnet fisheries' effort and catch until sufficient information has been gathered to assess their impact.
- (3) Adopt a resolution to manage and independently monitor gillnet fisheries in the high seas as well as support monitoring in coastal State CPC EEZs.

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)

What are the issues?

More data needs to be collected on FAD type, usage, and catch per effort in the IO to better understand changes in fishing capacity and likely impacts on stocks managed through the IOTC. That data should be used to develop science-based FAD management measures.

Why are we concerned?

Worldwide, FAD sets account for nearly 40% of tuna catches and 50% of skipjack catches. It's time for a concerted global effort to better monitor FAD usage and to establish a sound basis for FAD management in every ocean region. Shark mortality and other ecosystem impacts in the IO need to be reduced; using non-entangling FAD designs is a critical step to achieve that.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

- (1) Using mandatory CPC data collected in accordance with [Resolution 15/08](#), analyze FAD usage patterns and catch per unit effort (CPUE) to determine changes in fishing capacity and possible impacts on IO stocks.
- (2) Task FAD Working Group to continue coordinating, collaborating on, and considering research and advice presented at other RFMOs when defining IO management for drifting and anchored FADs.
- (3) CPCs need to implement the provisions of Resolution 15/08 for the use of non-entangling and biodegradable FAD designs.

Harvest Strategies

What are the issues?

In 2016 IOTC adopted a harvest control rule (HCR) for skipjack tuna consistent with scientific advice. The adoption of this HCR was the culmination of significant work, investment and advocacy by many parties – nations, industry, NGOs, scientists and retailers – and it paves the way for refinement as the management strategy evaluation (MSE) work continues.

Scientifically based harvest strategies must be adopted and/or refined for all key IO tuna species. These strategies should be informed by MSE analyses, stock assessments and the recommendations from the IOTC Technical Committee on Management Procedures (TCMP).

Why are we concerned?

Harvest Strategies, which include target and limit reference points together with harvest control rules, provide pre-agreed rules for the management of fisheries resources and action to be taken in response to changes in stock status. Pre-agreed rules and strategies enable prompt management action to avoid overfishing or to rebuild stocks, and reduce protracted negotiations that can lead to further declines in the stock.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

- (1) Fully support TCMP's mandate and act on TCMP recommendations on the adoption of harvest strategies.
- (2) Assist developing CPCs to support their participation in this work.
- (3) Consider the Scientific Committee-endorsed MSE outcomes for Albacore (ALB), Bigeye (BET), and Yellowfin (YFT) tuna.
- (4) Adopt species-specific harvest strategies that follow the decision framework, achieve targets, and avoid breaching limits as set out in [Resolution 15/10](#).

Bycatch and Sharks

What are the issues?

Science-based conservation and management measures to limit fishing mortality on sharks must be adopted and implemented. Data collection and reporting is essential. In 2016, the IOTC adopted Resolution 16/06, a mechanism to encourage CPCs to comply with reporting obligations for sharks and other bycatch species. The paucity of data on catches — including sharks — and interactions with non-target species prevents assessments and hinders the provision of scientific advice for effective conservation measures.

Why are we concerned?

Data on sharks in the IO are extremely limited, preventing accurate assessments of shark status. However, even with the limited data available, it is clear that the abundance of some species is declining.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

- (1) Adopt sufficient measures to limit fishing mortality on sharks, as recommended by the IOTC Scientific Committee.
- (2) Take immediate steps to enforce the existing IOTC Resolution on shark finning through the Compliance Committee.
- (3) Strengthen the IOTC Resolution on shark finning by requiring that all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached.

Monitoring, Control and Surveillance

Observer Coverage

What are the issues?

100% observer coverage on large-scale purse seiners should be required, as in WCPFC and IATTC.

The required 5% observer coverage in longline fisheries needs to be enforced.

If human onboard observers are not possible for certain fleets or vessel sizes, then guidelines for using electronic monitoring should be adopted.

Why are we concerned?

Comprehensive observer coverage is a critical component of monitoring and management for sustainable tropical tuna fisheries. Observer data also can be used for monitoring vessel compliance with management measures. And the paucity of data on catches and interactions with non-target species in the IOTC prevents assessment and hinders scientific advice for effective conservation measures.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

- (1) Adopt requirement for 100% observer coverage on large-scale purse seine vessels.
- (2) Adopt the guidelines for electronic monitoring that were endorsed by the Scientific Committee in 2016 (see IOTC-2016-SC19-15).
- (3) Identify and sanction non-compliance with the 5% longline observer coverage requirement.
- (4) Adopt a level of longline observer coverage that would provide reasonable estimates of total bycatch, such as 20%, which has been recommended by the scientific committees of IATTC and ICCAT.

Longline Transshipments

What are the issues?

To better manage transshipment and combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, deficiencies and loopholes must be addressed in the IOTC's [Resolution 14/06](#) on transshipment.

Why are we concerned?

Transshipment at sea can pose a high IUU risk if there are insufficient monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures in place. The 2016 Compliance Committee recorded approximately 40% non-compliance by CPCs with IOTC's transshipment measure.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

- (1) Explicitly define "large-scale tuna longline fishing vessel" (LSTLFV) in Resolution 14/06 and require vessels to report all in-port transshipments.
- (2) Require purse seine vessels to submit transshipment declarations to both the flag State and the IOTC Secretariat for in-port and at-sea transshipments.
- (3) Require flag states to report annually to Secretariat the vessels they have granted prior authorization to transship at sea.
- (4) Enforce the existing measure through compliance assessment process.

What are the issues?

Best-practice MCS tools are an essential component of sustainable fisheries management. Tools like satellite Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) and IUU Vessel Lists strengthen vessel compliance on the water, combat IUU fishing, and improve fisheries management by reducing uncertainty from non-implementation of agreed management measures.

Why are we concerned?

IOTC's current VMS program is not an effective MCS tool, and for many fleets, implementation of and compliance with the existing VMS requirements is very low. Also, the IOTC IUU Vessel List is not in line with best practices, and should be improved to strengthen IOTC's toolkit to combat IUU fishing activities.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

- (1) Develop a regional, best-practice satellite-based VMS.
- (2) Strengthen Resolution 11/03 on the IOTC IUU Vessel List — including clarifying listing and delisting procedures, adding common ownership as a listing criterion, and ensuring that flag States cannot veto IUU listing decisions for their vessels.

Compliance

Compliance Processes

What are the issues?

The IOTC has a transparent compliance process. However, improvements are needed to continue strengthening the assessment process, given the continued high level of CPC non-compliance. It is important that CPCs recognize that a strong compliance process improves fisheries management by identifying and addressing non-implementation of agreed management measures.

Why are we concerned?

IOTC Compliance Committee reports indicate there is significant CPC non-compliance with a range of IOTC measures, which increases uncertainty and reduces the effectiveness of IOTC conservation and management measures.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

- (1) Implement the MCS-related recommendations from 2nd IOTC Performance Review as agreed in [Resolution 16/03](#).
- (2) Require CPCs to submit a compliance action plan to ensure continual improvement with existing measures.
- (3) Begin considering how to respond to repeated, significant instances of willful non-compliance.

Addressing Data Gaps

What are the issues?

Developing effective, robust tuna stock conservation and management requires comprehensive information on fishing activity. Full compliance with data collection and reporting consistent with Resolutions [15/01](#) and [15/02](#) should be required, as such data is essential for tuna stock assessments, conservation, and management.

Why are we concerned?

The level of data reporting by IOTC CPCs remains very low. In 2016, the IOTC Compliance Committee noted an increase from 16 to 21 CPCs that failed to provide an on-time report in accordance with mandatory statistical requirements under Resolution 15/02.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

- (1) Implement recommendations PRIOTC02.05 and PRIOTC02.03 from the 2nd IOTC Performance Review on capacity building and data collection and reporting, respectively, as agreed in [Resolution 16/03](#).
- (2) Explore alternative mechanisms to support developing CPCs' compliance with data reporting obligations under Resolutions 15/01 and 15/02.
- (3) Support the Science Committee's recommendation 18.84 for joint analysis of operational catch and effort data from multiple fleets, to further develop methods and to provide indices of abundance for IOTC stock assessments.

Capacity Management

What are the issues?

A closed vessel registry is needed to support the management of fishing capacity in IO tuna fisheries.

Why are we concerned?

Excessive fishing capacity contributes substantially to overfishing, marine resources degradation, decline in food production potential, and economic waste.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

- (1) Implement recommendation PRIOTC02.09 of the 2nd IOTC Performance Review on fishing capacity management as agreed in [Resolution 16/03](#).
- (2) Consider the outcomes of the 2014 ISSF workshop on transferring fishing capacity from developed to developing countries.
- (3) Amend [Resolution 03/01](#) to create a comprehensive closed vessel registry.

Did you know?

50% of the IOTC tuna catch is landed by small scale and artisanal fleets.

Unfortunately, IOTC lags other RFMOs on data collection and reporting as well as on requiring 100% purse seine observer coverage.

ISSF is leading research on biodegradable FADs in the IO in collaboration with IO fleets, coastal nations, and other stakeholders.

ISSF also offers [guidelines for implementing non-entangling FADs](#).

Three [ISSF conservation measures](#) focus on shark bycatch mitigation.

ISSF Global Priorities for Tuna RFMOs

Implementation of rigorous harvest strategies, including harvest control rules and reference points

Effective management of fleet capacity, including developing mechanisms that support developing coastal state engagement in the fishery

Science-based FAD management & non-entangling FAD designs

Increased member compliance with all adopted measures adopted, and greater transparency of processes reviewing member compliance with measures

Strengthened Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) measures and increased observer coverage, including through modern technologies such as electronic monitoring and e-reporting

Adoption of best-practice bycatch mitigation and shark conservation and management measures



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