ISSF INTERNATIONAL SEAFOOD SUSTAINABILITY FOUNDATION

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INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION (IATTC) 84TH MEETING, JULY 22-26, 2019

Tuna Conservation

YELLOWFIN & BIGEYE TUNA

What are the issues?

The IATTC Scientific staff noted considerable uncertainties for the yellowfin tuna stock assessment in 2019 (SAC-10-07), as was the case for bigeye tuna last year. Thus, the current stock status for yellowfin tuna is not clear. For Bigeye tuna, all stock status indicators for 2018, except catch, are at, or near, their respective reference levels that indicate high exploitation rates (SAC-10-06).

Therefore, the IATTC Scientific Staff recommended again to limit the total annual number of floating-object and unassociated sets combined by Class-6 vessels in 2020 to 15,723 to supplement the current conservation measures that is in force till 2020 (C 17-02), which limits the number of active FADs and includes a 72 day full closure (SAC-10-19). However, there was no consensus at the IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) on this Staff recommendation. The SAC recommended that the IATTC Scientific Staff consider different alternatives to limit the fishing pressure by the purse seine fleet. This SAC recommendation is in line with the 2019 recommendation of the Joint Tuna RFMOs FAD Working Group that RFMOs prioritize scientific studies on potential limits on FAD deployments /sets and/or the current active FAD/buoy limits, in relation to management objectives.

Our Top Asks for IATTC in 2019

1. Direct the Scientific Staff to develop a set of options to limit fishing pressure by the purse seine fleet, such as limiting FAD deployments, further limiting the number of active FADs per vessel, and/or limiting the number of all set types.

2. Strengthen FAD management through science-based measures, including progressively moving towards FADs that do not use nets, and encouraging the provision of echo-sounder data for scientific purposes.

3. Fund knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, and the communication of scientific advice, such as by establishing a scientist-manager dialogue process, and develop harvest strategies for all key tuna species.

4. Require 100% observer coverage (human or electronic) for longline vessels, small class purse seine vessels and all vessels engaged in at-sea transshipment within five years, and develop minimum electronic monitoring and reporting standards.

5. Adopt measures to mitigate the incidental catch and maximize the post-release survival of sharks, mobulid rays and sea turtles, and require all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached.

6. Strengthen the IATTC compliance assessment process.

Why are we concerned?

The current conservation measures and the Scientific Staff's recommended limit on sets are not likely sufficient to reduce fishing mortality on yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna because:

- The current limit on the number of active FADs at sea only impacts a segment of the EPO fleet and the number of FADs at sea have been increasing as those vessels that were well below the limit have started deploying more FADs.
- The number of FAD and Non-Associated sets together per year has been stabilized at around 15,723 in recent years and so the Scientific Staff's recommended limit of FAD and Non-Associated sets does not represent an actual reduction.
- A global limit on sets could result in a race towards FAD fishing for all the fleets and, without a limit on dolphin associated sets, fishing mortality on yellowfin tuna by this segment of the fleet will be unregulated.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

Direct the IATTC Scientific Staff to develop a set of options to limit fishing pressure by the purse seine fleet, such as limiting FAD deployments, further limiting the number of active FADs per vessel, limiting the number of all set types, or other management measures with similar conservation benefits, accompanied by options to implement such conservation measures (such as, limits by CPC, by fleet, etc.), as recommended by the SAC.

FULL RETENTION OF TUNAS

What are the issues?

The full retention of tunas and subsequent use of non-target fish in coastal community marketplaces can greatly reduce the waste associated with fish being discarded at sea – contributing to food security in such communities. All four of the tropical tuna RFMOs have such a measure. C-17-02 requires that tropical tunas be retained except if unfit for human consumption or due to insufficient well space during the last set of a trip, but this measure does not precisely define what "final set of a trip" means.

Why are we concerned?

A lack of clarity regarding what the "final set of a trip" means can result in misinterpretations, weakened implementation, and uneven compliance with C-17-02. In contrast, the IOTC and ICCAT full tuna retention measures define the "final set of a trip."

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

Amend C-17-02 to clearly define the "final set of a trip," following the examples of the IOTC and ICCAT, to ensure clarity in implementation of and compliance with C-17-02. The ICCAT text (Rec.17-01) is as follows:

> *"When the vessel master determines that the tunas (bigeye, skipjack or yellowfin tuna) have been caught during the last set of a trip and there is not enough storage capacity to store the tunas (bigeye, skipjack or yellowfin tuna) caught during this set, these fish may only be discarded if:*
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> *- the master or the crew attempt to release the tuna alive (bigeye, skipjack or yellowfin tuna) as quickly as possible; and*

- no other fishing operation is conducted following the discarding, until such time as the tunas (bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin tuna) onboard the vessel are landed or transhipped."

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)

MONITORING & MANAGEMENT

What are the issues?

In the EPO, FAD sets account for nearly 50% of all tuna catches — and 70% of skipjack catches. The data on the activity with FADs and FAD type are crucial to understanding the current dynamics of FADs at sea and the way different segments of the fleets use FADs. This information is essential to designing science-based FAD management measures, including the numbers of active FADs, deployments or sets. In addition, the impacts of FAD structures (including the raft and netting material) when they beach or sink, as well as where such beaching or sinking events are occurring, are not well understood. Furthermore, there is uncertainty regarding the current stock status of yellowfin and bigeye tuna and biomass data from echo-sounder buoys used by fishers to track FADs could help develop indices of abundance. This acoustic data information could complement current stock assessment models.

Why are we concerned?

In the EPO the current efforts to collect data on FADs and monitor and manage FAD usage are not sufficient. The SAC reiterated, as did as the Joint Tuna RFMO FAD Working Group, the importance of all CPCs providing information on the use of FADs. Compliance with FAD data provision requirements in the IATTC is weak and must be improved. For example, at the time of the 2018 Commission meeting, just 47% of the required FAD data had been received by IATTC and a mere 3 out of 10 countries had sent 100% of the data required, and some countries had reported no data at all.

The impacts of FAD structure on the ecosystem are not well known. It is important to understand the extent of the issue. Because FADs are deactivated once they drift out of the fishing zone, critical information is lost on the trajectories of FADs throughout their entire lifetime, including where they sink or strand. This prevents scientists from finding effective solutions. Finally, shark mortality and other FAD-fishing ecosystem impacts in the EPO need to be reduced; using non-entangling FAD designs and moving towards biodegradable FADs are critical steps.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

(1) CPCs must ensure their flagged vessels comply with Resolution 18-05 and report all required FAD data in a timely fashion.
(2) In line with recommendations from the IATTC Bycatch Working Group and the Joint Tuna RFMO FAD Working Group, progressively move towards FADs that do not use nets as this is the only way to eliminate entanglement during the entire lifetime of the FAD, including when they strand.
(3) Accelerate progress to reduce contributions of FADs to marine litter and mitigate negative impacts on coastal habitats and marine ecosystems by progressing towards the use of biodegradable materials, as well as designing mechanisms and incentives for recovering FADs.
(4) Adopt the definition of FAD-related terms so that FAD management measures are effectively and fairly monitored and enforced, including the definition of a FAD set or non-associated set.
(5) Encourage the provision of biomass data provided by echo-sounder buoys utilized to track FADs, which could be used to design new direct indices of tuna abundance that could complement current stock assessments.

(6) Ensure the FAD marking scheme, as called for in Resolution C-18-05 is consistent with the FAO Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear.

Supply and Tender Vessels

What are the issues?

Supply vessels are used in many oceans by purse seine vessels fishing with drifting fish aggregating devices (dFADs). These vessels can be small purse seiners. The primary use of a supply vessel is for maintaining a purse seine vessel's network of dFADs at sea in good condition and in the appropriate areas.

Why are we concerned?

Although the IATTC adopted Resolution C-99-07 on Fish-Aggregating Devices in 1999 that prohibits the use of supply/tender vessels operating in support of vessels fishing on FADs in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, there is some evidence (Lennert-Cody et al., 2018) that small class purse seine vessels and other types of vessels – that are not required to carry observers – are being used as supply and tender vessels to deploy and service FADs in the EPO. Supply and tender 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, and there is no data collection on monitoring of this activity. Further, if small purse seine vessels are being used as supply and tender vessels, this is a compliance issue that must be addressed by the Commission. In 2018, the staff recommended to establish an observer program for purse seine vessels less than 363t carrying capacity with a target 20% coverage so that these vessels are better monitored.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

(1) Investigate the possible use of small class purse seine vessels as supply and tender vessels that are deploying and/or servicing FADs in contravention of C-99-07 and address such non-compliance through the Review Committee.
(2) In line with the SAC recommendation (SAC-10-19), establish an observer program for purse seine vessels of less than 363t carrying capacity and continue to examine the feasibility of using electronic monitoring systems aboard small purse seine vessels.

Harvest Strategies

What are the issues?

Harvest Strategies — which include target and limit reference points together with harvest control rules — provide pre-agreed rules for managing fisheries resources and acting in response to stock status changes. It is important to ensure that these pre-agreed rules are robust because these rules and strategies help to rebuild stocks or avoid overfishing. And they reduce the need for protracted negotiations and delays that can lead to further stock declines.

Why are we concerned?

Although the IATTC Performance Review, the Strategic Science Plan, and the SAC all endorsed improving knowledge-sharing, human-institutional capacity-building, and communication of scientific advice, there are currently no dedicated channels of communication about Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) within the IATTC (SAC 10-10a).

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

Implement the SAC recommendation and progress MSE in 2019 and 2020 by providing funds to support knowledge-sharing, human-institutional capacity-building, and the communication of scientific advice with stakeholders, scientists and managers, such as by establishing a scientist-manager dialogue process as has been done in other RFMOs, and establish harvest strategies for all key tuna species.

Bycatch and Sharks

SHARKS, MOBULID RAYS, SEA TURTLES & SEA BIRDS

What are the issues?

IATTC needs to improve measures and strengthen efforts to mitigate the bycatch of vulnerable species in both purse seine and longline fisheries. In addition, science-based conservation and management measures to limit fishing mortality on sharks must be adopted and implemented. Data collection and reporting is essential.

Why are we concerned?

In 2019, the IATTC Scientific Staff, the Bycatch Working Group and IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) once again made bycatch-mitigation and bycatch-reporting recommendations for both purse seine and longline fisheries. Unfortunately, the Commission has not acted to adopt these recommendations to date. Further, proposals by a number of IATTC CPCs to require sharks to be landed with fins naturally attached, and to strengthen measures to conserve shark populations, continue to be rejected.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

(1) Adopt measures to mitigate the incidental catch and maximize the post-release survival of sensitive fauna, such as sharks, mobulid rays, sea turtles, particularly leatherback sea turtles, and promote additional research on mobulids, including post-release survival, genetics and population studies, as recommended by the IATTC Staff, Bycatch Working Group and IATTC SAC.
(2) Fund electronic tagging experiments in order to evaluate post-release survival rates.
(3) Improve monitoring in all tuna fisheries without adequate observer coverage, such as small and medium-size purse seiners and longline vessels, including through the use of electronic monitoring, and promote the submission of bycatch data from IATTC Class 1-5 purse seine vessels and artisanal fisheries, as recommended by the IATTC SAC.
(4) Review and adopt amendments to Resolution C-11-02 to update the mitigation options, including potential harmonization with WCPFC seabird regulations and ACAP guidelines.
(5) Take immediate steps to enforce the existing shark-finning resolution, and strengthen it by requiring that all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached.
(6) Approve previous IATTC Staff recommendations to:

- Prohibit the use of steel leaders for longline vessels that do not target sharks as per Resolution C-16-06.
- Adopt and implement a sampling program for coastal longline and gillnet fisheries.

Monitoring, Control and Surveillance

OBSERVER COVERAGE AND ELECTRONIC MONITORING

What are the issues?

Comprehensive observer coverage is a critical component of monitoring and management for sustainable tropical tuna fisheries. For large-scale purse seiners, IATTC has implemented a 100% observer coverage requirement. However, smaller class (classes 1-5) purse seine vessels are not required to carry observers. The requirement for longline fisheries is only 5%. If human onboard observers are not possible for certain fleets or vessel sizes, including longliners, then guidelines for using electronic monitoring must be adopted as matter of priority.

Why are we concerned?

Available data on observer coverage in longline fisheries indicates some fleets are not even meeting the 5% mandatory minimum requirement. Observer data can be used for monitoring vessel compliance with management measures. The paucity of data on longline catches and interactions with non-target species prevents assessments — hindering scientific input on effective conservation measures. Further, the lack of observer coverage on small purse seiners hinders needed data collection for an important segment of the fishery and represents a big gap in the ability of the IATTC to assess if these vessels are implementing IATTC measures and they could be acting as supply and tender vessels. 100% observer coverage on tuna fishing vessels – human and/or electronic – is both feasible and necessary across all tuna fisheries to effectively address issues of conservation and compliance. Purse seine- and longline-caught tuna comprise the vast majority of global annual tuna catch and therefore are the fisheries where 100% observer coverage will have the greatest impact.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

(1) Require 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic) for longline vessels, small class purse seine vessels and all vessels engaged in at-sea transshipment within five years.
(2) Develop minimum electronic monitoring and reporting standards, including for logbooks, for both longline and purse seine as recommended by the IATTC SAC and Joint Tuna RFMO FAD Working Group, so that electronic monitoring can be used to ultimately achieve 100% observer coverage in the longline fishery, and in the purse seine fishery for all vessel classes;
(3) At the same time, identify and sanction vessel non-compliance through the Review Committee with the existing 5% longline observer coverage requirement.
(4) Request the IATTC Scientific Staff to analyze the available operational-level longline observer data for bycatch and present it at the 2020 bycatch working group meeting, as requested by the IATTC SAC.

TRANSSHIPMENT

What are the issues?

Transshipment at sea presents risks for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and other illicit activities if not well-managed and transparent. To better manage transshipment, ensure complete data collection and timely reporting, and to combat IUU fishing activities, deficiencies and loopholes in Resolution C-12-07 must be addressed.

Why are we concerned?

Transshipment at sea can pose a high IUU risk if monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures are insufficient. The IATTC transshipment resolution is not consistent with best practices, such as with respect to the time-frames for seeking authorization to transship at sea from the flag State, observer coverage, and deadlines for submitting completed transshipment declarations.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

(1) Amend Resolution C-12-07 to explicitly define large-scale tuna longline vessels as those 20m or greater LOA.
(2) Amend Resolution C-11-05 to define large-scale tuna longline vessels that must be listed as those >20m LOA.
(3) Amend Resolution C-12-07 to:

(i) increase the advance notification of transshipment requirement to at least 48 hours;
(ii) require the submission of transshipment declarations by the fishing vessel to the IATTC Secretariat and Flag State in near real-time, but no more than 24 hours after the transshipment event;
(iii) require 100 percent observer coverage (human, electronic, or a combination) on board both the fishing vessel and the carrier vessel for all at-sea transshipping events;
(iv) require all carrier vessels to be flagged to an IATTC Member or, at a minimum, a Cooperating Non-Member;
(v) establish a publicly available list of all vessels authorized to engage in at-sea transshipment activities.

(4) Require information on all at-sea transshipment events (such as notifications, declarations and observer reports) to be reported to the Secretariat, flag States of both vessels, port State and coastal State.
(5) Develop electronic reporting standards for receiving vessels.

PORT STATE MEASURES

What are the issues?

Effective Port State measures form an important component of a suite of MCS tools essential to combatting addressing IUU fishing.

Why are we concerned?

Port State measures will be most effective if implemented on a regional basis by all those engaged in the fishery, and consistent with the standards prescribed in the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

(1) For all Members 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; and
(2) Adopt a measure to give effect to it at a regional level as has been done in CCSBT, IOTC, ICCAT and WCPFC.

MCS TOOLS

What are the issues?

MCS tools are an essential component of sustainable fisheries management. For example, satellite Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) strengthen vessel compliance on the water, combat IUU fishing, and improve fisheries management by reducing uncertainty.

Why are we concerned?

IATTC's MSC tools, such as its vessel monitoring system (VMS) measure, must be strengthened and aligned with best-practice standards.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

(1) Amend C-14-02 to further strengthen the IATTC VMS, including consideration of a centralized or partly centralized program with greater data sharing and to ensure that VMS data can be available to the Secretariat and used for scientific or compliance purposes.

(2) Require that all vessels authorized to conduct at-sea transshipment have an operational VMS system onboard and that VMS position data are provided to the IATTC Secretariat in near-real time with appropriate confidentiality protections.

TRANSPARENCY IN CATCH OR EFFORT LIMITS

What are the issues?

IATTC has adopted catch or effort limits for bigeye, yellowfin, skipjack and Pacific Bluefin tunas. In 2017, the IATTC did require weekly reports from purse seine fishing that were available to members of the Commission, but this is not required in C-17-02. Reporting of catches in near real-time, including when the total and/or allocated catch limits are being approached and if CPCs are within the prescribed limits would allow CPCs and markets to make necessary conservation decisions during a given year if quotas are being achieved more quickly than anticipated. Furthermore, it is imperative for future harvest strategies that the Commission adopt effective MCS mechanisms that enable near real-time management of the fisheries. Scientifically designed projections useful for predicting when an overall limit could be achieved may be able to be developed by using historical patterns informed by in-season data.

Why are we concerned?

A lack of in season monitoring of how CPCs are approaching, or possibly exceeding, annual individual catch or effort limits for particular tuna stocks, or a total allowable catch or total allowable effort for a specific tuna stocks, prevents rapid and precautionary conservation, management and purchasing decisions within a given year. It also undermines rapid detection of non-compliance with catch or effort controls.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

(1) Require CPCs to report their in-season catch or effort status with respect to their individual catch or effort limits and/or annual TACs or TAEs, where specified; and
(2) Request the Scientific Staff to develop quality assurance mechanisms for verification of in-season reports, including through the use of electronic reporting technologies, to minimize the risk of misreporting.

Compliance

COMPLIANCE PROCESSES

What are the issues?

IATTC has a transparent compliance process but it can be strengthened. Members must recognize that a strong compliance process improves fisheries management.

Why are we concerned?

While observers are allowed to participate in the IATTC Review Committee, the IATTC's final Compliance Report is not transparent about members' individual compliance with their obligations to the Commission, and the IATTC does not have a scheme of responses to non-compliance.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

(1) Require members to submit a compliance action plan for identified infractions.
(2) Begin discussing how to respond to repeated, significant non-compliance, and track trends over time.
(3) Adopt amendments to C-11-07 to increase transparency by:

(i) making public members' responses to non-compliance; and

(ii) detailing in the Review Committee report specific areas where members and cooperating non-members are non-compliant — and making specific recommendations to address such non-compliance.

(4) Develop audit points or performance metrics for IATTC measures to ensure clarity in members' obligations, reporting requirements, etc., and what will be assessed in the Review Committee.

Capacity Management

VESSEL REGISTRIES & FLEET CAPACITY

What are the issues?

Although IATTC is the only tuna RFMO with a closed vessel registry, its current capacity is well in excess of resource productivity.

Why are we concerned?

Operative purse seine capacity is estimated to be continuing to increase since 2015 due to latent capacity being activated.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

(1) Implement the 2014 Technical Experts Workshop on the Capacity of the Tuna-fishing Fleet in the EPO recommendations to strengthen the 2005 Plan for the Regional Management of Fishing Capacity and reduce the current capacity in excess of resource productivity.
(2) Consider the 2014 ISSF workshop on the transfer of fishing capacity from developed to developing countries outcomes in any regional capacity management scheme.

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

Did you know?

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

ISSF develops resources for the vessel community, including skippers guidebooks on bycatch-mitigation techniques and as well as reports on electronic monitoring and vessel monitoring systems.

ISSF offers guidelines for implementing non-entangling FADs.

Three ISSF conservation measures focus on shark bycatch mitigation.

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