



## ISSF POSITION STATEMENT

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- ***Tropical Tunas***

Skipjack tuna stocks were re-assessed in 2014 and are estimated to be in a healthy status. The SCRS recommended that harvest levels for the eastern stock not be allowed to increase over the level achieved in recent years. Since the current management plan for tropical tunas (Recs. 11-01 and 13-01, primarily focused on bigeye and yellowfin) expires at the end of 2015, **ISSF urges the Commission to extend the measures at least through 2016, by which time the stocks of bigeye and yellowfin will have been re-assessed.**

- ***Temperate Tunas***

The 2014 stock assessments of bluefin tuna indicate that the stocks are rebuilding under ICCAT management plans. **ISSF urges the Commission to adopt TACs consistent with SCRS advice that will continue the rebuilding programs.**

In 2013, SCRS conducted new assessments for northern and southern albacore. The northern stock assessment indicates that the stock is slightly overfished but increasing (spawning biomass is 6% below the MSY level) and overfishing is not occurring. **ISSF urges ICCAT to not increase the current TAC of 28,000 t for northern albacore in order to allow the stock to continue to rebuild.** For the southern stock, different models gave different results, but the median estimate suggests the stock is somewhat overfished (spawning biomass 8% below the MSY level) and subject to slight overfishing (fishing mortality is 4% above the MSY level). Projections indicate that at the current TAC level the stock status will improve only by 2020 in terms of rebuilding and ending overfishing with a probability greater than 50%. **ISSF urges ICCAT to consider decreasing the current TAC of 24,000 t for southern albacore, and in no case to increase it.**

Serious data deficiencies for the Mediterranean albacore stock have been highlighted by the SCRS for several years, but have not been addressed by CPCs. **The Mediterranean albacore stock is the only major commercial tuna stock in the world that remains to be assessed quantitatively. ISSF 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 first meeting of the Standing Working Group for Enhancing the Dialogue Between Fisheries Scientists and Managers (SWGSM) in 2014. ISSF now urges the Commission to take this work into consideration for the establishment of target and limit reference points and a HCR for North Atlantic albacore. This requires a thorough dialogue between decision makers, scientists and stakeholders involved in the process. ISSF further urges ICCAT to initiate similar work for other tuna stocks under its purview.*

- **Observer Coverage for large-scale purse seiners.** Comprehensive observer coverage on purse seine vessels is a critical component of sustainable fisheries management for tropical tunas. **ISSF urges ICCAT to extend the 100% observer coverage on large-scale purse seiners in its tropical tuna fisheries 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.

**In order to assist RFMOs and CPCs in developing or strengthening their national, regional or sub-regional human observer programs for purse seine vessels, and to ensure that observer programs worldwide are striving to reach the same set of high standards, ISSF recently published a [technical paper](#) that includes a set of best practices.** For more information, and a link to the ISSF Technical Report, please see:

<http://iss-foundation.org/2014/03/28/promoting-best-practices-for-purse-seine-observer-programs-worldwide/>

In addition, ISSF has adopted a [conservation measure](#) that requires companies to conduct transactions only with those large-scale purse vessels that have 100% observer coverage (human or electronic, if proven to be effective) of each fishing trip. ISSF Participating Companies are audited annually, on their compliance with this measure in order to show leadership and underscore the importance of 100% observer coverage in purse seine fisheries globally.

- **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 continues to urge ICCAT to adopt comprehensive catch retention measures for all tunas.**
- **VMS.** ISSF recommends that purse seine and longline vessels participate in VMS programs that meet global standards. To assist CPCs and RFMOs in achieving this goal, [ISSF has released a technical paper that surveys the VMS programs in RFMOs](#), and identifies a set of best practice elements for States and RFMOs to use in developing or strengthening VMS programs for fishing vessels. **This technical paper highlights a number of areas in which the current ICCAT VMS provisions fall short of global best practices. Therefore, the ICCAT Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM) Working Group recommendation to amend Recommendation 03-14 on VMS to change the current 6 hour transmission rate to 4 hours is a positive step forward. ISSF urges ICCAT to adopt this amendment this year, and take further steps to modernize its VMS measure in 2015 to bring it in line with global best practices.** For more information, and a link to the ISSF Technical Report, please see:

<http://iss-foundation.org/2014/05/14/implementing-best-practices-for-vessel-monitoring-systems/>

- **Sharks.** ISSF urges CPCs to follow the SCRS recommendation to report fishery statistics of all ICCAT and non- ICCAT fisheries capturing pelagic sharks, including recreational and artisanal fisheries. Furthermore, ISSF is urging all tuna RFMOs to adopt measures to **prohibit deliberate purse seine setting around whale sharks, and the at-sea removal of shark fins – mandating that they remain naturally attached until the shark is landed. Further, ISSF urges ICCAT to request the SCRS to undertake an assessment of blue sharks, shortfin makos and common thresher sharks by a date certain so that catch or effort limits, reference points and HCRs can be established for these species.**
- **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 to RFMOs data on FADs (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 notes the substantial progress made by ICCAT through the 2013 adoption of amendments to Recommendation 11-01 regarding FAD management and reporting. ***ISSF strongly supports the SCRS recommendation for the creation of a Working Group on FADs that involves all stakeholders and urges all CPCs, if they have not already done so, to provide these data starting 1 January 2015, as called for in the Recommendation, and also a detailed analysis of FAD usage patterns and catch per effort analysis by their fleets operating in the Atlantic Ocean in order to enable a determination of changes in fishing capacity and likely impacts on stocks managed through ICCAT. ISSF also encourages the Commission to adopt a marking scheme for identifying individual FADs.***

In addition to improving FAD management, ***ISSF strongly supports the provisions in Recommendation 11-01 that CPCs should promote the use of non-entangling FADs (FAD designs to reduce the incidence of entanglement of bycatch species, using biodegradable material as much as possible). ISSF encourages all CPCs to take this step as soon as possible and to undertake research on the effectiveness of various FAD designs. This is a critical step in the reduction of shark mortality and reduction of other ecosystem impacts in the Atlantic Ocean.***

- ***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. To underscore this importance of this issue, in October ISSF clarified its [Resolution to Limit the Growth in Fishing Capacity of the Global Large-Scale Tropical Tuna Purse Seine Fleet](#). Through this Resolution, ISSF Participating Companies must refrain from transactions in skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin tuna caught by large scale<sup>1</sup> purse seine vessels that are not actively fishing for tuna, or under contract for construction, as of December 31, 2012 or a replacement for an existing vessel.

***ISSF 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. ISSF also supports the Kobe III call for creating mechanisms to transfer capacity to developing countries.***

***Given the importance of a mechanism to transfer capacity from developed to developing countries to any regional capacity management scheme, ISSF hosted a Workshop in March 2014 to start a dialogue among stakeholders on this issue. ISSF hopes this Workshop and dialog will contribute to progressing capacity management in the tuna RFMOs. The workshop report can be accessed here:***

<http://iss-foundation.org/resources/downloads/?did=522>

- ***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 (CoC) 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.***

For more information tuna RFMO compliance processes, access an [ISSF Technical Report](#) that includes a set of best practices at: <http://iss-foundation.org/resources/downloads/?did=447>

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this resolution, large-scale purse seine vessels are those at least 335 m<sup>3</sup> fish hold volume.