

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) MEETING, NOVEMBER 14-22, 2017

Tuna Conservation

What are the issues?

Effective management measures are needed to ensure bigeye and yellowfin tuna catches are maintained at sustainable levels.

Why are we concerned?

According to SCRS estimates, the established catch limits for bigeye and yellowfin were exceeded in 2016 by 11% and 16%, respectively. Exceeding TACs for overfished stocks will worsen their status and hinder their rebuilding to healthy levels. An added complication for yellowfin is that the catch limit is not allocated between fishing gears or CPCs, which makes it very difficult to take corrective measures.

Also, while other RFMOs have adopted tuna catch retention measures, ICCAT has not yet taken steps to do so. The dumping of less-valuable tuna in favor of higher-value catch distorts our understanding of fishing operations' actual impact on tuna stocks.

What is ISSF asking ICCAT to do?

(i) Adopt stock-specific management measures consistent with SCRS advice.

(ii) Allocate the yellowfin catch limit by gear and/or flag so that CPCs clearly know their individual limits.

(iii) Strengthen its management of tropical tuna fisheries by: (a) ensuring that fishing capacity of the purse seine fleets is commensurate with catch limits (see Vessel Registries and Fleet Capacity below), and (b) adopting in-season monitoring of catches to avoid overshooting of catch limits (see Transparency in Catch Quotas below).

Our Top Asks for ICCAT in 2017

- 1** Adopt stock-specific tuna management measures that are consistent with the scientific advice, allocate the yellowfin catch limit by gear and/or flag, and strengthen overall the management of tropical tuna fisheries to ensure compliance with catch limits.
- 2** Immediately address the serious gaps that exist in FAD data reporting, ensure that the ICCAT requirement for non-entangling FADs is being complied with, and promote research into biodegradable FADs.
- 3** Adopt, on an interim basis, one of the Harvest Control Rules for North Atlantic Albacore that have been tested and advance MSE for other species, ensuring sufficient funding for it to progress.
- 4** Strengthen monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures, such as Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) and Port State Measures.
- 5** Increase the observer coverage requirements for large-scale purse seine vessels and longline vessels to support data collection.

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)

MONITORING & MANAGEMENT

What are the issues?

Comprehensive data on FAD deployments and usage by all fleets are required to effectively manage the tropical tuna purse seine fishery. In addition, ensuring that currently deployed FADs are non-entangling and moving towards biodegradable FADs in the future are critical steps towards mitigating ecosystem impacts.

Why are we concerned?

In the Atlantic, FAD sets account for nearly 50% of tropical tuna catches — including 67% of skipjack catches. It's time for a concerted global effort to better monitor and manage FAD usage in every ocean region. Since 2013, ICCAT has required the submission of FAD data to the Secretariat for use by the SCRS (Recs. 13-01, 14-01, 15-01 and 16-01). However, each year only a few CPCs submit the required data, usually in an incomplete fashion, thus hindering regional analyses by SCRS. By the time of the 2017 SCRS, some FAD data covering 2016 had been reported for only 3 of 11 flags that operate purse seine vessels in the Atlantic. Some fleets point to the lack of clear definitions in Rec. 16-01 and unclear data submission forms as the reasons for not reporting.

Shark mortality and other FAD-fishing ecosystem impacts in the Atlantic Ocean need to be reduced. ICCAT has required the use of non-entangling FADs since January 2016 to reduce the entanglement of sharks and turtles. Compliance with this requirement needs to be addressed by ICCAT. Moving towards the use of biodegradable FADs is a critical next step to address marine debris.

What is ISSF asking ICCAT to do?

- (i) Immediately address the serious gaps that continue to exist in FAD data reporting, such as through requiring a combination of clearer definitions and clearer instructions on required data and submission forms.
- (ii) Require that all FAD data items identified in paragraph 23 of Recommendation 16-01 should be in 1°x1° squares so that they can inform detailed analyses by the SCRS.
- (iii) Ensure that its requirement for non-entangling FADs is being met, and promote research into biodegradable FADs.

Harvest Strategies

What are the issues?

ISSF applauds the successful meeting of ICCAT's Standing Working Group for Enhancing the Dialogue Between Fisheries Scientists and Managers (SWGSM) this year. ISSF also applauds the progress ICCAT made last year to advance its Harvest Strategy processes, which now have a timetable, and the testing this year of HCR elements for Northern Atlantic albacore tuna via management strategy evaluations (MSEs). These actions pave the way for ICCAT to implement a comprehensive harvest strategy that fisheries can follow to maintain stocks at an optimal level.

Why are we concerned?

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. They also reduce the need for protracted negotiations and delays that can lead to further stock declines.

What is ISSF asking ICCAT to do?

- (i) Adopt, on an interim basis, one of the Harvest Control Rules for North Atlantic Albacore that have been tested by SCRS, and carry out an independent peer review of the MSE work.
- (ii) Advance MSE for other species, ensuring sufficient funding for it to progress.

Bycatch and Sharks

What are the issues?

ICCAT 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; therefore, ISSF applauds ICCAT for adopting [Recommendation 2016-13](#) on the Improvement of Compliance Review of Conservation and Management Measures Regarding Sharks Caught in Association with ICCAT Fisheries last year.

Why are we concerned?

A 2017 assessment indicates that the North Atlantic stock of shortfin mako is overfished and catches need to be reduced by more than two-thirds to prevent further stock declines.

What is ISSF asking ICCAT to do?

- (i) Adopt measures to reduce catches of the northern shortfin mako stock while ensuring that accurate data are collected and submitted on catches of all oceanic sharks.
- (ii) Strengthen ICCAT's shark-finning measure [[Rec 04-10](#)] by requiring that all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached.

Monitoring, Control and Surveillance

OBSERVER COVERAGE AND ELECTRONIC MONITORING

What are the issues?

Effective monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) 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 requires 100% observer coverage on tropical tuna purse seiners, but only during the time/area FAD moratorium. Since 2013, ISSF Conservation Measure 4.3(a) 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 -- even though it is not required by ICCAT year-round. Also, the ICCAT observer requirement for longline fisheries is only 5%. If human onboard observers are not possible for certain fleets or vessel sizes, including longliners, then ICCAT should adopt guidelines for using electronic monitoring.

Why are we concerned?

All large-scale purse seine vessels should have 100% observer coverage on every fishing trip to ensure the collection of critical data on bycatch and discards. Further, the SCRS has highlighted that the current 5% observer coverage requirement is inadequate to provide reasonable estimates of total bycatch. Data on observer coverage in longline fisheries indicates some fleets are not even meeting the 5% mandatory minimum requirement. The paucity of data on longline catches and interactions with non-target species prevents assessments — hindering scientific input on effective conservation measures.

Finally, to ensure RFMOs receive quality data from observer programs, it is essential that these observers can do their jobs in a safe and professional environment.

What is ISSF asking ICCAT to do?

(i) 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. Such a requirement would be facilitated if it included a regional mechanism for an observer from a coastal State national program (registered with the Secretariat) to be valid in other countries' EEZs.

(ii) Implement the SCRS recommendation to increase the minimum level of observer coverage to 20% for all major fishing gears and, at the same time, strengthen CPC compliance by identifying and sanctioning non-compliance through the Compliance Committee.

(iii) Follow the example of the WCPFC and develop binding measures to ensure the safety of human observers.

(iv) Progress the development of E-monitoring and E-reporting standards for longline vessels, as soon as possible.

(v) Develop measures to require electronic monitoring for both large-scale purse seine vessels and longline vessels that will be in addition to the observer coverage levels currently required by ICCAT for the purposes of strengthening transparency of these fishing operations.

TRANSSHIPMENT

What are the issues?

ISSF is concerned by some CPCs' failure to provide 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.

Why are we concerned?

Transshipment at sea can pose a high IUU risk if monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures are insufficient.

What is ISSF asking ICCAT to do?

Amend the ICCAT Transshipment Recommendation 2016-15 so that it covers longline vessels of 20m or greater LOA.

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. Port State Measures are also an essential tool for combatting IUU fishing and ensuring fish or fish products from such activities do not enter the market.

Why are we concerned?

ICCAT's MCS tools, such as its vessel monitoring system (VMS) measure 2014-09 and Recommendation 12-07 on an ICCAT Scheme for Minimum Standards for Inspections in Port, must be strengthened and aligned with best-practice standards and the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures, respectively.

What is ISSF asking ICCAT to do?

- (i) Adopt further amendments to modernize its VMS measure [Rec 14-09] 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, and reducing the frequency of transmissions (which is currently 4 hours, which the SCRS has noted is insufficient for most fishing gears), to 1-hour as is required in the WCPFC.
- (ii) Adopt amendments to Recommendation 12-07 to better align it with the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. ISSF also urges all CPCs that have not yet done so to ratify the 2009 FAO Agreement.

TRANSPARENCY IN CATCH QUOTAS

What are the issues?

ICCAT has adopted a total allowable catch (TAC), and in some cases, catch limits for CPCs for bigeye, yellowfin, albacore and bluefin tunas. However, during a given year, there is no mechanism for CPC reporting when the total and/or allocated catch limits are being approached and if CPCs are harvesting within their prescribed annual catch limits. The IATTC has had such a mechanism for the purse seine fishery whereby in season consumption of annual catch limits were reported by CPCs to the Secretariat (C-17-01). This mechanism allows an RFMO to make necessary conservation decisions during a given year if quotas are being achieved more quickly than anticipated.

Why are we concerned?

A lack of monitoring how CPCs are approaching, or possibly exceeding, annual individual catch limits for particular tuna stocks, or a TAC for a specific tuna stock, prevents an RFMO from making rapid and precautionary conservation and management decisions within a given year.

What is ISSF asking ICCAT to do?

Develop a mechanism to require CPCs to report to ICCAT its in-season status with respect to their individual annual catch limits and/or an annual TAC, where specified for specific tuna stocks.

Compliance

COMPLIANCE PROCESSES

What are the issues?

ICCAT has one of the best designed and most transparent compliance assessment processes of the five tuna RFMOs, but it can be strengthened. CPCs must recognize that a strong compliance process improves fisheries management. In 2016, ICCAT adopted [Resolution 16-17](#) Establishing an ICCAT Schedule of Action to Improve Compliance and Cooperation with ICCAT Measures, which is a positive development and the first of its kind among the four tropical tuna RFMOs.

Why are we concerned?

ICCAT should further improve its compliance process by making binding the schedule of actions to improve compliance.

What is ISSF asking ICCAT to do?

Codify Resolution 16-17 into a binding Recommendation, as soon as possible.

Capacity Management

VESSEL REGISTRIES & FLEET CAPACITY

What are the issues?

Experts agree that there is overcapacity in the global tuna fleets.

Why are we concerned?

ISSF continues to be concerned with the global growth of fishing capacity in ICCAT. Fishing fleet overcapacity increases pressure to weaken management measures, and eventually it leads to stock overexploitation.

What is ISSF asking ICCAT to do?

(i) Establish limited entry through closed vessel registries, and develop a common currency to measure fishing capacity, such as cubic meters of well volume.

(ii) Support the Kobe III call for creating mechanisms to transfer capacity to developing countries.

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 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.

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, 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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