

INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION (IOTC)

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Tuna Conservation

What are the issues?

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

Why are we concerned?

In 2017, the IOTC agreed to amendments to the yellowfin tuna rebuilding plan. However, the impact of the yellowfin measure agreed in 2016 (which only came into effect in January of 2017) has not yet been fully evaluated and so it remains unclear if the amendments made will strengthen the rebuilding of the yellowfin stock.

ISSF is concerned that while the IOTC has been progressing needed management regimes for the major tropical tuna stocks, there has been continued inaction to arrest the overfishing of other key IOTC species, including neritic tuna and billfish species that have been assessed to be overfished and/or undergoing overfishing. These IOTC fisheries will experience further declines in stock status if no management actions are agreed.

However, ISSF applauds the commitment by coastal States to table a proposal for the neritic tunas in 2018 and look forward to working with these States this year on this initiative.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

- 1) Retain the overall catch reductions contained in Resolution 17/01, 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 17/01 through the IOTC Compliance Committee.

Our Top Asks for IOTC in 2018:

1. Ensure compliance with Resolution 17/01 through the IOTC Compliance Committee.
2. Advance MSE for albacore, yellowfin and bigeye, and conduct a review the LRPs in Res. 15/10, leading to adoption of harvest control rules by 2019.
3. Strengthen MCS measures to support data collection and the implementation of harvest strategies.
4. Strengthen FAD management, including of supply and tender vessels; ensure full implementation of the requirement for non-entangling FADs; and support projects testing biodegradable FADs
5. Require 100% observer coverage on large-scale purse seine vessels; increase longline observer coverage to 20%; and develop EMER standards so that EM can be used to ultimately achieve 100% observer coverage in purse seine and longline fisheries
6. Strengthen the IOTC compliance assessment process

- (3) Develop management measures to arrest the overfishing of neritic tuna and billfish species and rebuilding plans for those species that have been assessed to be in an overfished state.

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.

Why are we concerned?

The IOTC Science Committee (SC) has continually 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.
- (4) Fund dedicated capacity building activities, or data compliance and support missions, aimed at improving the availability of data for neritic species, and also fund the development of standardized CPUE series for gillnets, including organization of a joint workshop or hiring an international consultant, as recommended by the IOTC Science Committee.

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 17/08](#), 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) Ensure CPCs are implementing fully the provisions of Resolution 15/08 for the use of non-entangling and biodegradable

FAD designs and amend Resolution 17/08 to include a date by which non-entangling FADs should be fully implemented, as recommended by the IOTC Science Committee.

(4) Implement the Science Committee's recommendations regarding the development of a revised form for reporting FAD activity data and clear definitions to ensure consistency in FAD data submission.

(5) Support and collaborate with the BIOFAD Project and urge CPCs visiting or fishing on FADs clearly identified as experimental to report to their national scientists the status of FAD (and devices) and their activities on this FAD (including any catch data).

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 supply vessels range from 40 to 50 meters in length and are operated by a crew of around 6 persons. These vessels can be refurbished from other fisheries or be built specifically to serve as dFAD maintenance boats with deck characteristics designed to manipulate dFADs. The primary use of supply vessel is for maintaining a purse seine vessel's network of dFADs at sea in good condition and in the appropriate areas. ISSF applauds IOTC for adopting progressive reductions on the use of supply and tender vessels, data reporting requirements, and that supply and tender vessels must be on the IOTC Record of Vessels.

Why are we concerned?

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. Greater data collection is needed regarding supply vessels, as well as regulation and monitoring.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

(1) Clarify that observer coverage requirements (either human or electronic) apply to supply and tender vessels so data from these fishing activities are collected and reported, and to ensure compliance with Resolution 17/01.

(2) Clarify that VMS reporting requirements apply to supply and tender vessels so the activities of these vessels are effectively monitored.

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 (TRPs and LRPs) 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, and assist developing CPCs to support their participation in this work.
- (2) Consider the Scientific Committee-endorsed MSE outcomes for Albacore (ALB), Bigeye (BET), and Yellowfin (YFT) tuna and advance MSE for these stocks.
- (3) Adopt species-specific harvest strategies that follow the decision framework, achieve targets, and avoid breaching limits as set out in Resolution 15/10 and conduct a review the LRPs in Resolution 15/10 so to allow for the adoption of harvest control rules by 2019.

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 IOTC Resolution 17/05 on shark finning through the Compliance Committee.
- (3) Strengthen IOTC Resolution 17/05 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) Advance the Pilot Project for the IOTC Regional Observer Scheme (Res 16/04) to accelerate adoption of a requirement for 100% observer coverage on large-scale purse seine vessels.
- (2) Develop minimum standards for EMS and e-reporting information system (e-Maris), including as part of the Pilot Project for the IOTC Regional Observer Scheme (Res 16/04) and endorsed framework (IOTC-2017-S21-10) that are applicable to different gear types, and, in particular, for longline and purse seine so that EM can be used to ultimately achieve 100% observer coverage in these fisheries as a priority.
- (3) Identify and sanction non-compliance with the 5% longline observer coverage requirement.
- (4) Increase the level of longline observer coverage to 20%, which has been recommended by the scientific committees of IATTC and ICCAT, in order to provide reasonable estimates of bycatch and to improve overall monitoring of the fishery.

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.

MCS Tools

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 17/03 on the IOTC IUU Vessel List — including adding common ownership as a listing criterion, and ensuring that flag States cannot veto IUU listing decisions for their vessels.

IMO Numbers

What are the issues?

The IOTC, like all the tuna RFMOs requires vessels on the IOTC Record of Fishing Vessels to have an IMO number (Resolution 15/04), unless such vessels are not eligible to receive one. IMO numbers are a critical tool in combatting IUU fishing and strengthening flag State control, and thus all those vessels that are able to receive an IMO number should do so.

Why are we concerned?

Since the implementation of the IOTC Resolution, the threshold for which IHS will grant an IMO number has changed and now “all motorized inboard fishing vessels of less than 100 GT down to a size limit of 12 metres in length overall (LOA) that are authorized to operate outside waters under national jurisdiction” are eligible to receive an IMO number.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

Bring the change in threshold for issuing an IMO number to the attention of CPCs, and urge all those with vessels on the IOTC Record of Fishing Vessels that did were not previously eligible to receive an IMO number to obtain one as soon as possible.

TRANSPARENCY IN CATCH OR EFFORT LIMITS

What are the issues?

IOTC has adopted catch limits for yellowfin tuna via Resolutions 16/01 and 17/01 and skipjack tuna via the Harvest Control Resolution 16//02. However, during a given year, there is no transparent mechanism for CPC reporting when the total and/or allocated catch limits are being approached and if CPCs are within the prescribed limits. For instance, under current Resolutions, it is not possible to gauge compliance with catch limits until at least 2 years after the limits are put into effect. A transparent in-season reporting mechanism would allow RFMO CPCs and markets 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 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.

What is ISSF asking IOTC to do?

- (1) Transparently report its in-season catch or effort status with respect to their Individual catch or effort limits and/or annual TACs or TAEs, where specified.
- (2) Develop and apply appropriate simulation methods for testing the robustness of alternative allocation schemes under consideration as recommended at TCAC4.
- (3) Consider adopting management measures that are easier to enforce, such as a total fishery closure (potentially with two closure periods).

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.
- (4) Adopt the Science Committee's recommendation to strengthen the penalty mechanisms adopted in *Resolution 16/06 On measures applicable in case of non-fulfilment of reporting obligations in the IOTC* to improve compliance by CPCs in terms of the submission of basic fishery data in accordance with Resolution 15/01 and 15/02.

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, especially when considering Allocation Schemes.
- (3) Amend [Resolution 03/01](#) to create a comprehensive closed vessel registry.

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?

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.



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